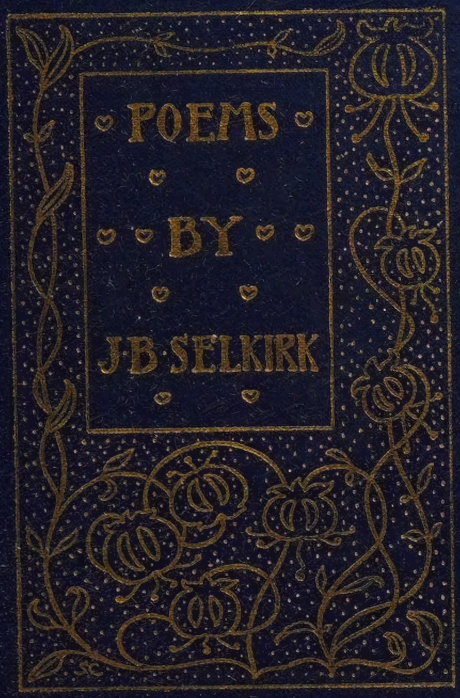
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BY
J·B·SELKIRK

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BY

J. B. SELKIRK

AUTHOR OF 'ETHICS AND ÆSTHETICS OF MODERN POETRY'
'BIBLE TRUTHS WITH SHAKESPERIAN PARALLELS'
ETC.

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EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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Songs of Yarrow and the Border

"*There is the famous stream twinkling in the sun. What stream and valley was ever so be-sung! You wonder at first why this has been, but the longer you look the less you wonder.*"—'Horæ Subsecivæ,' Dr JOHN BROWN.

A SONG OF YARROW.

SEPTEMBER, and the sun was low,
The tender greens were flecked with yellow,
And autumn's ardent after-glow
Made Yarrow's uplands rich and mellow.

Between me and the sunken sun,
Where gloaming gathered in the meadows,
Contented cattle, red and dun,
Were slowly browsing in the shadows.

And out beyond them Newark reared
Its quiet tower against the sky,
As if its walls had never heard
Of wassail-rout or battle-cry.

O'er moss-grown roofs that once had rung
To reiver's riot, Border brawl,
The slumberous shadows mutely hung,
And silence deepened over all.

Above the high horizon bar
A cloud of golden mist was lying,
And over it a single star
Soared heavenward as the day was dying.

No sound, no word, from field or ford,
Nor breath of wind to float a feather,
While Yarrow's murmuring waters poured
A lonely music through the heather.

In silent fascination bound,
As if some mighty spell obeying,
The hills stood listening to the sound,
And wondering what the stream was saying.

What secret to the inner ear,
What happier message, was it bringing,
With more of hope, and less of fear,
Than men dare mix with earthly singing?

Earth's song it was, yet heavenly growth—
It was not joy, it was not sorrow—
A strange heart-fulness of them both
The wandering singer seemed to borrow.

Like one that sings and does not know,
But in a dream hears voices calling,
Of those that died long years ago,
And sings although the tears be falling.

Oh Yarrow! garlanded with rhyme
That clothes thee in a mournful glory,
Though sunsets of an elder time
Had never crowned thee with a story,—

Still would I wander by thy stream,
Still listen to the lonely singing,
That gives me back the golden dream
Through which old echoes yet are ringing.

Love's sunshine! sorrows bitter blast!
Dear Yarrow, we have seen together;
For years have come, and years have past,
Since first we met among the heather.

Ah! those, indeed, were happy hours
When first I knew thee, gentle river;
But now thy bonny birken bowers
To me, alas, are changed for ever!

The best, the dearest, all have gone,
Gone like the bloom upon the heather,
And left us singing here alone,
Beside life's cold and winter weather.

I, too, pass on, but when I'm dead
Thou still shalt sing by night and morrow,
And help the aching heart and head
To bear the burden of its sorrow.

And summer's flowers shall linger yet
Where all thy mossy margins guide thee;
And minstrels, met as we have met,
Shall sit and sing their songs beside thee.

BOWHILL.

A REIVER'S RIDE.

OH day of days, when we were young!
With hearts that laughed at wind and weather,
That day, the gathered guests among,
When you and I, while songs were sung,
Each to a ready saddle sprung,
And rode into the rain together.

An endless, fruitless feud, I wot,
With vengeance vowed in every weather,
Between the Cessfords and the Scott,
A foolish quarrel, long begot,
Had barred our love; we argued not,
But rode into the rain together.

What though the skies were frowning black,
And dark and sunless was the weather,
And heaven was filled with driving rack,
We thought not once of turning back,
That day we left the beaten track,
And rode into the rain together.

Loud clanged the windy gates above,
And yet through all the howling weather,
Soft as the murmur of a dove,
We only heard low words of love,
As foot to foot and glove to glove
We rode into the rain together.

Our way was long, and bleak, and bare—
A trackless road in wintry weather;
We swam the Tweed beyond Traquair,
And follow will, who follow dare;
One tried it and we left him there,
And rode away in rain together.

Though tempests blew and waters beat,
We heeded neither wind nor weather,
But held our way through driving sleet,
O'er rocky stream and sinking peat,
For love was strong and life was sweet,
That day we rode in rain together.

Right onward in a wild delight,
For few could follow in such weather,
We never slacked our steady flight,
Till down from Minchmuir's misty height
Fair Ettrick Forest lay in sight,
As we rode in the rain together.

Where Yarrow's reddening waters roared—
A rugged ride in stormy weather—
Where late our gallant king restored
The outlawed lands of Newark's lord,
By Hangingshaw we crossed the ford,
Still riding in the rain together.

Till on by Ettrick's deeper flood,
While fierce and fiercer raged the weather,
We reached the Chapel in the Wood,[1]
And there beneath the holy rood
Our sacred promises made good,
That night we rode in rain together.

[1] Seleschirke.

Once more to saddle, for our ride
Was eastward yet through darkening weather,
Till home beyond sweet Teviot's tide
We rode in moonlight side by side,
And happier bridegroom, happier bride,
There never rode in rain together.

But days have come and days have gone,
With summer suns and winter weather;
When now I ride, I ride alone—
The grass upon your grave has grown,
And many a weary year has flown,
Since we two rode in rain together.

Young Norman has the eyes and brow—
His mother's son in any weather;
And Lilian has your lips, I trow;
And oh, how oft their faces now
Bring back the day we made our vow,
And rode into the rain together.

THE VALE OF ETTRICK PAST AND PRESENT.

Four hundred years ago, this lovely morn,
Fair Ettrick Forest, in her sylvan prime,
Lay basking in the sunny summer clime.
Here where I stand, among the ripened corn,
One might have heard the royal bugle horn,
Or some bluff hunter-poet of the time
Chanting aloud his latest ballad rhyme
Of hero done to death, or maid forlorn.

The Forest's gone! the world's improved since then!
A forest now of chimneys, Babel-high,
Belch out their blackened breath against the sky.
Take off your hats to Progress, gentlemen!
So runs the world; but as for me, heigh-ho!
I should have lived four hundred years ago.

DEATH IN YARROW.

I.

It's no' the sax month gane,
Sin' a' our cares began—
Sin' she left us here alane,
Her callant and gudeman.
It was in the spring she dee'd,
And noo we're in the fa';
And sair we've struggled wi't,
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

II.

An awfu' blow was that—
The deed that nane can dree;
And lang and sair we grat
For her we couldna see.
I've aye been strong and fell,
And can stand a gey bit thraw;
But the laddie's no' hissel'
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

III.

In a' the water-gate
Ye couldna find his marrow—
There wasna ane his mate
In Ettrick Shaws or Yarrow.
But he hasna noo the look
He used to hae ava;
He's grown sae little buik
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

IV.

I tak' him on my back
In ilka blink o' sun,
Rin roun' about the stack,
And mak'-believe it's fun.
But weel he kens, I warrant,
There's something wrang for a',
He's turned sae auld-farrant
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

V.

For when he's played his fill,
I canna help but see
How he draws the creepie-stool
Aye the closer to my knee;

And he turns his muckle een
To the picter on the wa',
Wi' a face grown thin and keen,
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

VI.

I mak' his pickle meat—
And I think I mak' it weel;
And I warm his little feet,
When I hap him i' the creel;
And he kisses me fu' couthie,
For he downa sleep at a'
Till he hauds up his bit mouthie,
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

VII.

And then I dander oot,
When I can do nae mair,
And walk the hills aboot,
I dinna aye ken where;
For my hairt's wi' ane abune,
And the ane is growin' twa,
He's dwined sae sair, sae sune,
Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

VIII.

And noo the lang day's dune,
  And the nicht's begun to fa',
And a bonnie harvest mune
  Rises up on Bourhope Law.
It's a bonnie warlt this,
  But it's no' for me at a',
For a' thing's gane amiss
  Sin' his mother gaed awa'.

GATHERING THE FRAGMENTS.

A LITTLE faded photograph,
  And a curl of golden hair,
With half a dozen broken toys
  Beside an empty chair.—
O God! is this the whole that's left
  Out of a life so fair?

THE HOMEWARD MAIL.

(A LETTER FROM A SCOTTISH EMIGRANT TO HIS FRIEND IN ETTRICK.)

DEAR Tam, yestreen I got yer letter,
And thank the Lord it fand us better;
For tho' to you I mak' a rhyme o't,
Gude kens we've had an unca time o't.
If after a' that we've come thro'
I were at hame in Ettrick noo,
The final vote for emigration
Wad stand some reconsideration.

And yet we're maybe nane the waur o't;
Things on the whole are haudin' forrit.
Oor land allotment's noo fenced roun',
And bit by bit we're settlin' doun;
We've broken grund, we've in oor seed,
We've got a hoose abune oor head,

Sin' last I wrote. My faix, we're busy;
There's wark oot here for man and hizzie;
Ane hardly kens what first to rin to,
For a' thing here's just to begin to.

Ye mind yon little speakin' body
That got sae fu' on Fauldshope's toddy,
The emigration folk sent roun',
That gaed about frae toun to toun,
Enlairgin' on that land o' Goshen
Awaitin' us ayont the ocean.
Eh, Tam! sic lees that crater tell'd
(Paid for't, nae doot) when he upheld
That everybody comin' here
Had naething i' the warlt to fear—
That ilka family wad be guidit,
An' a' their needfu' wants providit.
Oor wants, indeed! when first we landit
We might amaist as weel been strandit
On some wild coast, where nae ane kenn'd us,
Wi' naether bite nor bield to fend us;
Oor every bite, the sma'est portion,
Was made a han'le for extortion;
And as for aught like bield or bed,
The women were aloo'd a shed.

Thank God that's past; but even yet
We're no' inclined just to forget
The words on emigration's meerits
O'er honest Simson's halesome speerits;
The promises the agent made us,
And a' that wad be dune to aid us,—
"We'd want for naething, gude nor gear;"
The ill deil claut him for a leear!

If ye should come across the body,
Ye'd better warn him weel that should he
Wi' ony o' oor lads fa' in,
I winna answer for his skin.
Justice at hame he may hae jookit;
Had he been here his neck wad yeukit.

Tam, ye're an elder; tell me how
Ye let that crater wag his pow
I' the parish kirk? Ay, i' the poopit
Ye let him scrauch till he was roopit!
Whatever tempted ye'r kirk-session
To put God's hoose in the possession
O' sic a crater? Was't the yammer,
The cant o' pheelanthropic glamour,
The sleek, glib-gabbet gospel smirk
Prevailed on ye to gie 'm the kirk?

A bonnie place to air his lees in!
If yon black hole that leears bleeze in
Should in the lang-run no' trepan him,
The deevil hasna got what's awn him!
Eneuch!—nae mair o' him henceforth;
He's taen mair paper than he's worth.

And now that we've got by the worst,
I'll answer a' your queries. First,
The question o' oor daily breed,
"Is't a' we like? Is't a' we need?"
Second, "How decent folk can thole
Without proveesion for the soul?"
"God-fearin' folk without a kirk;
We're surely sittin' i' the mirk."
Thirdly, the subject o' the land—
Is't light or heavy? till or sand?
Wi' endless questions round aboot it.
And last, can we mak' siller oot o't?

Weel, to begin wi' what's maist needfu',
Our meat at first was something dreedfu'.
To get your constitution shaken,
Just try twal weeks on tea and bacon.
If that should fail to pu' ye doon,
My word for't, ye're a sturdy loon;

Wi' naething else for weeks thegether,
Ye'd need an inside made o' leather.

Ye mind yon muckle toosy yokel,
Wull Tamson's callant frae the Brockhill?
At first young Wullie, thinkin't fine
To breakfast every day and dine
On rowth o' bacon ham, and tea,
Devoored it wi' avidity;
And ilka day, or it cam' nicht,
Had putten punds o't oot o' sicht.
Weel, when he'd played his knife and fork
Six weeks on naething else than pork,
Wull fell into a kind o' dwam;
When, strange! the very name o' ham
Was puzzen till him. Day by day
And hour by hour he pined away,
Till white's a sheet, and lean's a hadda',
He crined into a perfect shadda'.
But now, though no' just yet the same,
Oor meals are growin' liker hame.
Of course there's things awantin' here
To Scots folk bred will aye be dear;
A haggis, Tam, wad just be manna,
And mony ane wad sing hosanna
O'er barley broth and gude pease-banna.

However, after what we've seen
We've little reason to compleen.
We've grand wheat bread, the very wale;
But eh, man, Tam, it's wersh to kail!

Last month we got our first aitmeal,
And aye sin' syne we're doin' weel;
E'en Wullie's dwam's a'maist forgot,—
His cure lay i' the parritch pot;
Sae wi' an aith he's undertaken
Never again to fash wi' bacon,
And half in anger, half in shame
(For, 'deed, he had hissel' to blame),
Wull swears he'll never hae the grace
To look another soo i' the face.

Oor aliment at length dismiss't,
The Kirk comes next upon the list;
And no' without a thought ye reckoned
When ye assigned its place the second.
No' that we gie the speerit's need
A lower rank than daily breed,
Or that we've ever aince forgot
The God abune us; but oor lot
At first was wi' sic needy craters,
A common thing wi' emigraters,

The bulk o' them as I can vooch
Without a ha'penny in their pooch;
An' some, to aggravate their waes,
Were no' just o'er weel aff for claes.
Ay, tell't in Ettrick, Tam, my man,
And tell't wi' a' the force ye can;
Send word to every shiel an' shaw
Frae Cossarshill to Carterhaugh,
That emigration, here or there,
It's hard on them that come oot bare.
To tell the truth, in mony an instance
It's just a scram'le for existence.

Noo Tam, in sic a state o' things,
Amang "the airrows and the slings,"
As Wullie Shakespeare wud hae said it—
When penniless privation's made it
A' but impossible to think
On higher things than meat and drink,—
When destitution's hungry plug
Has cloggit up the speerit's lug,
Afore ye ask the sowl to fecht
Ye first maun put the body richt.
And sae we thought it little guile
To let the Kirk stand by a while.

But stop, I've maybe run my heid
Against the cleric's caulder creed,
That seeks the immortal pairt to cherish,
Although the body pine and perish!
Like mony a creed, it's fu' o' grace
Till ance it's seen starvation's face,
When Providence ordeens the wrestle
'Tween yerthen creed and yerthen vessel!
Ay, Tam! had ye been here to see'd
Wi' me, I think ye wad agreed
Ye canna graft the higher thocht,
Wi' every limb and nerve o'erwrocht,
On him that wars a deadly strife
Wi' the necessities o' life.
It's no' religion, Tam, it's cant,
To preach to gapin' rags and want;
A man wi' naething in his wame,
If sowl he has, it's no' at hame.
It stands to reason, common-sense,
And poverty's experience,
Afore ye ply him wi' the Carritch
Ye'd better start him wi' his parritch.

If we've dune wrang, I'm wae to grieve ye,
Sae noo I'll hasten to relieve ye.
We've just secured accommodation

To haud a gey bit congregation.
The other night we held a meetin'
To gie the ha' it's first hoose-heatin'.
Eh, man! it was a happy nicht;
I never saw a finer sicht
When man and maid stood up to sing
That grand "Auld Hunder"! Tam, by jing,
Ye never made the rafters ring
In Ettrick Kirk wi' sic a birl;
'Twad dune ye gude to heard the skirl,—
The like o't's no' been kenn'd for praise
In Ettrick-head sin' Boston's[1] days.
What maybe help'd to blaw the flame,
The auld tune had the sough o' hame.

How is't, Tam, when I write to you
My news is never halflins through,
Till a' at ance the paper's dune;
And though the muse be in sic tune
That I could sit and rhyme a mune,
I e'en maun stop and fauld my letter,
And for the rest remain your debtor.
Aboot the Kirk I've lots to say
That maun be said some other day;

[1] Boston, the minister of Ettrick, and author of 'The Fourfold State,' used on occasion to conduct the psalmody himself.

If what's been said on't seems uncertain,
What yet's to come may prove divertin'.
We send ye a' oor kind regairds;
May a' the luck that's on the cairds
Attend your life and life's concerns;
Oor love to Jenny and the bairns.
The Lord maintain your cruse and creel,
And, for the present, fare ye weel.

THE LAST EPISTLE TO TAMMUS.

(FIVE YEARS AFTER.)

DEAR Tam, last mail the wife wad tell
That I had had a gey bit spell
O' wakish health. It's no' like me,
That a' my life hae aye been free
Frae troubles, and was never kent
To hae a serious complent.
I never tuke to bed but wance,
And that was but an orra chance.

Ye mind o' fishin', you and me—
We had been catchin' twae or three—
Among the rocks ahint Brigend,
When, castin' oot, wi' extra bend
I slippit off a muckle stane,
And brak', ye mind, my collar-bane.
I've never been laid up sin' syne,
Nor yet afor'd, that I can min'.

But this is waur; I'm off the streicht,
Week after week I'm losin' weicht,
Until at last, it stands to raison,
I'm just a thing for hingin' claes on.
We've had a doctor, clever man,
And he's dune a' that doctor can,—
A man respeckit near and fer;
His grannie was a Sprouston Ker.
Ye see I'll no' forsake my order;
Till daith, I'll aye uphaud the Border.
We've some grand specimens oot here,
For still they come, frae year to year.
Ane disna need to hear them talk,
Ye ken them by their very walk.
There's Gibbie Elliot, Kinmont Rob,
Aye rouch and raucle for a job;

They'll sleep as sound ahint a dyke
As row'd in blankets on a tyke.
There's Telfer, Douglas, Learmont, Scott,
And thaim that joined the Ancrum lot.
Wi' siccan names there's little fear
That Border bluid will fail oot here.

The Border? Hoots! I'm off the stot.
Where was I? for I've clean forgot.
I have ye,—I was skin and bone,
It was the doctor we were on.
Weel, every time he cam' alang
He couldna find oot what was wrang,
And yet when he took stock o' me
He didna like the look o' me.
Although nae doot I had a teasick,
It's no', said he, a case for pheesick;
So there the doctor's treatment ends,
But guess ye what he recommends?
"What say ye to a voyage hame?"
Oh, Tam, it set my heart aflame;
And as for answer, I was dumb,—
The word was there, it wadna come.
I fand my senses turnin' dizzy;
I glower'd at him, and then at Lizzie.

Out spak' the doctor, fair and square,
"Gudeman, I can do naething mair.
It's after carefu' keen reveesion
I've come at length to this decision.
I've had some cases like your ain
Where a' my treatment's been in vain.
Wi' lads and lassies naething's wantin',
But auld folk dinna stand transplantin'.
I'll bate a shilling, when ye're there,
Ye'll rally in your native air."

A week's gane by; the maitter's settled,
I'm comin' hame: I'm better fettled,
Fresher lookin', no sae yallow,—
That doctor chield's a clever fallow.
However, Tam, 'tween me and you,
To shame the deil and say what's true,
My trouble's been—the greater pairt—
A rush o' Ettrick at the hairt.
Ye think I shouldna fashed mysel'
Wi' thoughts o' hame, but nane can tell
What little things may yet torment ye
Till ance ye've left them a' ahint ye.
My hairt, though ye may ca' me fule,
It's a' in Ettrick but the hule.

The country here's a perfit staw,
It's no' the least like oors ava;
A level plain without a bend on't,
Wi' nae beginnin' and nae end on't;
As fer's the eye can look upon,
The land's as flat's a barley-scone.
It's no' like oors, wi' heichs and howes,
Wi' shelter'd neuks and grassy knowes.
The water tae, sae douf and dule,
No' here a stream and there a pule;
Until ye test it wi' a straw,
Ye hardly ken it moves ava.

Ah, Tam! gie me a Border burn
That canna rin without a turn,
And wi' its bonnie babble fills
The glens amang oor native hills.
How men that ance have ken'd aboot it
Can leeve their after lives without it,
I canna tell, for day and nicht
It comes unca'd for to my sicht.
I see't this moment, plain as day,
As it comes bickerin' o'er the brae,
Atween the clumps o' purple heather,
Glistenin' in the summer weather,

Syne divin' in below the grun',
Where, hidden frae the sicht and sun,
It gibbers like a deed man's ghost
That clamours for the licht it's lost,
Till oot again the loupin' limmer
Comes dancin' doon through shine and shimmer
At headlang pace, till wi' a jaw
It jumps the rocky waterfa',
And cuts sic cantrips in the air,
The picture-pentin' man's despair;
A rountree bus' oot o'er the tap o't,
A glassy pule to kep the lap o't,
While on the brink the blue harebell
Keeks o'er to see its bonnie sel',
And sittin' chirpin' a' its lane
A water-waggy on a stane.
Ay, penter lad, thraw to the wund
Your canvas, this is holy grund:
Wi' a' its highest airt acheevin',
The picter's deed, and this is leevin'.

When at my warst, my sairest plichts
Took aye the form o' sleepless nichts.
Then what mair nat'ral than look back,
And wander o'er the beaten track?

Sae in my mind, when a' was mirk,
I just begude wi' Ettrick Kirk.
Eh man! I like yon bonnie corner—
For buildiness it's maist byor'ner.
If back again to Ettrick spared,
Believe me, Tam, in yon kirkyaird
I'd rather lie within the year
Than be Methuselah oot here.
It's weel, when through this vale o' tears,
To think we'll lie wi' oor forebears;
To have oor ain folk side by side
Mak's daith itsel' less ill to bide;
And could we rest wi' hairts mair leal
Than Jamie Hogg and Tibbie Shiel,
And mony mair we baith could name,
As dear, though little ken'd to fame?

Then in my mind I tak' a turn
Frae Thirlestane House to Rankleburn.
On tufty Tushielaw's hillside
The thick-ribbed ruins still abide
Where Adam Scott, that menseless thief—
Scourge o' the Border—cam' to grief.
But I must up and off again,
By Crosslee, Newburgh, Deloraine,

And doon through Hyndhope and the Shaws,
Past bonnie hazel banks and haws,
To Singlie burn; the spot near by
Where Jamie Telfer lost his kye,
Till wi' the help o' bold Buccleuch
And Wat o' Harden's retinue
They soucht a prey wi' muckle speed,
Twice coontit, back to fair Dodhead,
And show'd Bewcastle's bold bravado
The metal Ettrick men were made o'.

And then, is there a bonnier bit
On ony water, head to fit,
Where, tumblin' doon the rugged streams,
The lashin' water froths and creams,
Till o'er the saumon-loup it spins
'Tween green Helmburn and Kirkhope linns,
Where Ettrick rins?
Then past Brigend
And fair Howford it tak's a bend,
And wanders through wi' gentler turn
The quiet haughs o' Hutlerburn;
Then on its way it gi'es a ca'
At Fauldshope, Aikwood, Carterha',
Where fairy-fettered young Tamlane
Through Love's great pow'r was freed again.

And noo we've broucht oor wanderin' feet
To where the Forest waters meet,
Where Yarrow's sorrow-laden sang,
That 'mong her hills has linger't lang,
At length yields up her soul—at rest,
A maiden on her lover's breast.

That meeting-pule to me was dear,
I mind its waters deep and clear;
I've fish't it often as a callant,
Wi' muckle zeal and little talent.
The native floo'rs, the auld-worlt stories,
The lyric love, the Border forays,
Its whisperin' eddies, ins and oots,
Spak' ever mair to me than troots.
Fair Water! fairer though it be
Clad in its daithless minstrelsy.
Yet though its sang shall never wane,
It has a beauty o' its ain:
I see its banks, I hear its voices,
As wanderin' onward it rejoices,
And though its music's far frae me,
And though I ken it canna be,
The tear my een a moment blin's,
I hear the linties in the whins
Where Ettrick rins.

But there, I'm dune.
D. V. I'll hae a crack wi' sune.
The wife sends love to you and yours.
I'm glad to say we're leavin' oors
Contentit, doin' weel, and happy.
There's plenty room here; naething scrappy.
If man's chief end be gatherin' gear,
There's nae doubt ye can mak' it here.
But post-time's up, sae I'm awa.
Fareweel, and joy be wi' a'.

LOVE IN YARROW.

I.

You tell me I am losing time,
I'm taking life too lightly,
My lamp let flicker into rhyme
Which should be burning brightly;

That I have left life's serious call
For something more alluring,
Mistaking the ephemeral
For that which is enduring.

This change, my friend, that you have seen,
May seem to you mysterious;
With me, however, it has been
Well thought upon and serious.

I too have burned the midnight oil,
In painful soul-debating;
I too have turned the stubborn soil
You now are cultivating.

I gave it up because I found
'Twas mostly self-delusion,—
Word-spinning in an endless round,
That yielded no conclusion.

I'm sick of philosophic search
Into the roots of being,
The strain to see from earthly perch
What lies beyond earth's seeing.

I've dropped life's riddles, every one,
That wind and warp the soul of us;
The children, dancing in the sun,
Are wiser than the whole of us.

You tell me, too, that thought is thin
That knows alone life's gladness;
"Eyes cannot rightly see within
Till sanctified by sadness."

There's less of wisdom, friend, than sound,
In the pedantic folly
That deems those views of life profound
Because they're melancholy.

Whence is the source of all our life,
Whence has been, shall be ever?
The sweetener of our mortal strife,
The Godhead's living river?

The eternal waters from above
No taints of sadness borrow;
The perfect wisdom, perfect love,
It never knew a sorrow.

God's gladness is but light afar,
That streams the wide world over;
It washes now the farthest star,
And gilds this field of clover.

What man, depicting heaven's abode,
Would give it sorrow's features?
On earth, too, they are likest God,
The happiest of His creatures.

In this our morbid, meddling age
Of peevish introspection,
We feed too much upon the page
That nourishes dejection.

You're gaining something from your books,
No doubt; but in addition,
You're losing, too, your old good looks
And happy disposition.

Where, think you, will this brooding end?
Already you look phthisical;
You're paying with your health, my friend,
For studies metaphysical.

Then take an older man's advice
Come out into the garden,
Leave morbid self-analysis
And psychologic burden.

For who would burrow like a mole,
And seek the dark in day-time,
Or rest content with winter's dole
When he could laugh in May-time?

Come out and rest your wearied eyes,—
Trust me you'll never rue it;
Read nature's book in field and skies,
As happier creatures do it.

Throw up, my friend, your fallacy
That gladness must be shallow;
Come, close your books for once with me,
And let your mind lie fallow.

There's Galawater, Yarrow's vale,
Or Ettrick near beside us;
We're but an hour from Teviotdale,
Tweed's pleasant stream to guide us.

Come, one or other let us choose,—
Sound health demands these pauses;
And possibly your gloomy views
Have but material causes.

'Twixt want of health and doleful thought
There's often correlation;
Solemnity sometimes is nought
But sluggish circulation.

Life's highest glimpses still are caught
Where blood is warm and wealthy;
Unhealth begets unhealthy thought—
The thoughts of health are healthy.

A truce to preaching. Let us go,
We'll talk no more of sorrow;
We'll get the horses out, and know
Once more the braes of Yarrow.

II.

He met his fate on Yarrow braes,
Small blame to me or credit;
I could not move him from his ways,—
An unseen trifle did it.

Love's eyes with dewy light suffused,
Dealt out from silken lashes,
The fire that always has reduced
Philosophy to ashes!

Philosophy, said I? Alas!
The girl but gave a toss of her
Delightful head; then presto, pass!
And where was our philosopher?

No knight that ever lived in song,
Or groaned beneath love's arrow,
More keenly felt the fatal prong
In ballad-haunted Yarrow.

By sweet St Mary's slopes of green
The god waylaid and tricked him,
And on my word I've seldom seen
A more ridiculous victim.

Philosophers are easily crazed;
At first he did not show it,
But wandered for a week half-dazed,
And then he turned poet.

Such poems too, for workmanship—
Much worse than ever I did—
Two rondeaus on her upper lip,
And one upon her eyelid.

He tried again his studious joys
When comfortably married,
But when his pretty wife brought boys,
Philosophy miscarried.

'Twas that which dealt the final blow,
And fairly closed the portals
On his philosophy; and now
He's much like other mortals.

For out of books, from which before
He built his melancholy,
His boys build castles on the floor,
And play at rolly-poly.

Oh, great are the Philosophies!
But deep are Nature's Forces!—
To-day I saw him on his knees,
They said the game "was horses."

LOOKING BACK IN YARROW.

A GOLDEN WEDDING.

Gudewife, we're gettin' auld;
It's fifty years and mair
Sin' I was young and yald,
And you, Jean, young and fair.
We started for the manse,
The road lay through the heather
That day we took oor chance
As man and wife thegither.

Ye mind the dance at e'en,
We muster'd thirty-seeven;
I sometimes wonder, Jean,
Hoo mony o' them's leevin';
The dancers and the singers,
The whole o' them that's spared
Ye can coont them on your fingers—
The rest's in the kirkyaird.

A fifty years' recruit
Leaves married couples few;
Death rings the auld anes oot,
And Time rings in the new.
Auld freends asunder drift,
Like leaves in autumn swirl'd,
Until to them that's left
It's like another world.

Years bring new names, new blude,
To fill the empty places,
And wash oot like a flude
The auld fameeliar faces.
New houses, tae, hae sprung
Around us, cauld and peekit
Wi' slates. When we were young
The feck o' them were theekit.

In sawin', sheerin', kirnin',
Machines noo bear the gree,—
But what's the use o' girnin'?
They'll no fash you and me.
Yet gude auld ways and true
It's sad to see negleckit,
When what's ta'en up for new
Sae muckle o't's affeckit.

Just look at oor new schulin'—
I carena hoo it's honour't;
A hantle o't's just fulin',
And knocks the bairn donnart.
I'll grant ye ane in ten
The system forces forrit:
It suits the few, but then
The bulk o' them's the waur o't.

No' every change we make
Can aye be for the better;
In some we but forsake
The speerit for the letter.
The mind may cram and feed
On endless information—
Unless some sense gang wi'd
It's no richt eddication!

We buird schules round us set,
Where ilka little bantam
Maun gape his gab and get
The regulation quantum.
Wi' their diploma'd lair,
Inspector for adviser,
They'll maybe stap in mair,
But deil a ane's the wiser.

Sic trash oor young folk read!
Wae's me! the worlt maun alter
Sair for the waur indeed
That disna ken Sir Walter.
There's Thacker'y at his best,
We'll no deny he's thorough,
But after him the rest
Are puir beside the Shirra.

But, Jean, are they the gainers
Wi' a' their booin', keekin',
Their Anglicees'd fine mainners,
And clippit ways o' speakin'?
Low'd! hoo can auld folk bend
To their new-fangl't bustle?
The very tunes oo' kenned
Are no' the tunes they whustle!

And oh! the siller wared
On Sunday claes, bates a';
Jock dresses like the laird,
And Kirstie just as braw.
If she but wadna roose
That tongue o' hers sae ready,
Naebody wad jalouse
She wasna born a leddy.

Warst change o' a' that's made!
Yarrow's sequester'd byeway,
Oor ain romantic glade,
Turn'd to a common highway.
The noisy vulgar thrang,
They've gliff'd awa' the fairies,
Sin' a' the worlt maun gang
And picnic at St Mary's.

The laverock i' the lift,
That tuned "the Shepherd's" lay,
Noo stints his gudely gift,
Or tak's it far away,—
Leavin' his lowly berth,
Till, by their clamour driven,
The song once heard on earth
Is only heard in heaven.

Langsyne, aboon the brig,
Nae wheel but on a barrow,
And Dr Russell's gig,
Was ever seen in Yarrow.
Noo coaches, cadgers' cairts,
And carriages galore,
Hailin' frae a' the airts,
Gang rumlin' by the door.

An endless noisy roon'
The lee-lang simmer day;
Ane's glad when nicht comes doon,
And sends them a' away.
But some o' them, puir things,
Are shilpet-like and spare,—
It's that, nae doubt, that brings
Them here for caller air.

Nor can we baulk their cause,
Or blame them a' thegither;
For where's the wund that blaws
Like what comes o'er the heather?
Sae, Jean, we'll haud content,
For changes aye maun be;
There's maybe mair gude in't
Than auld folk weel can see.

And whether richt or wrang,
To flyte on them, or fleer,
It's hardly worth a sang
For a' the time we're here.
Argy-bargy to the last,
Ye'll find there's aye twa ways in't;
The young lauch at the past,
The auld anes at the present.

But pittin' what we've seen
  Wi' what we see thegither,
Is't no' a mercy, Jean,
  We're spared to ane anither?
When auld, and laid aside,
  The changes that attack us
Are no' sae ill to bide
  When we've a friend to back us.

And then, when comes the change
  That comes to a' the same,—
For, far as we may range,
  "*The gloamin' brings us hame*,"—
There's aye this blessin' in't
  For auld folk, Jeanie, woman—
The ane that's left ahint
  Canna be lang o' comin'.

Sae we'll just dander doon:
  The first that gets the ca'
We'll leave to Him aboon,
  Wha kens what's best for a'.

A BORDER RAID.

(UNDER QUEEN VICTORIA.)

A DARK-EYED daughter of the South
Across our northern border came,
With quiet brow, and most sweet mouth,
And eyes that held a tender flame.

The Saxon stopt his merry troll
To look at her—ay, lack-a-day!
He looked at her, and for his soul
He could not turn his eyes away.

That speechless parley, years ago,
Between the black eyes and the blue.
But why repeat what all men know?—
The old, old story, ever new.

And so they lived, and loved, and died,
And passed away into the night;
Like names upon the sand, the tide
Came up and washed them out of sight.

Their girls are women; stalwart sons
  Are seeking each his own career;
And so the restless world runs
  From day to day, from year to year.

Lord, what a speck of time is life!
  'Tis but a children's holiday;
We play at houses, man and wife,
  Till, one by one, we're called away.

It is not long for any; some
  Have hardly tried an earthly flight
Before their little faces come
  To kiss us for the long "good night."

There must be life beyond earth's bound,—
  Its very briefness here compels
Our faith to seek a surer ground:
  Life would not have a meaning else.

Oh break for me, thou second birth!
  The bar that keeps us from our dead;
For I am weary of the earth,
  And fain would have the riddle read.

AN APPEAL FROM YARROW.[1]

And is it true? And will they come
With pick and spade and barrow,
To dig a grave beneath the hills
For thy dear waters, Yarrow?

Where Scott and Wordsworth sang the songs
Whose echoes still are ringing;
The valley where "the Shepherd" heard
His deathless "skylark" singing,—

Oh, touch it not; it fills the heart
With memories that harrow,
To think that we shall hear no more
Thy babbling music, Yarrow.

Where every step is holy ground,
Enshrined in Border story;
Here, sacred to a lover's vows,
And there, to battle gory.

[1] Written whilst a Bill to supply Edinburgh and district with water taken from Yarrow was before Parliament.

Where, down by Deuchar's dowie houms,
The bravest knight in Yarrow
Fell, fighting on the bloody sward,
All for his "winsome marrow."

Where Cockburn's widow sat beside
Her murdered hero weeping,
"The moul' upon his yellow hair"
Her woman's fingers heaping.

Where Margaret and her lover fled—
Black Douglas and the seven
On ringing hoofs behind them roared
Their mad appeals to heaven.

Where not a stream that glides between
Gray rocks with mosses hoary,
But seems to babble to the air
The burden of its story.

The Lake! oh let not that be made
A thing of pipes and sluices;
Let something live for beauty's sake,
Unmixed with baser uses.

Still let it live in fancy's heart,
A haunt for happy fairies,
And make no wretched reservoir
Of lovely lone St Mary's.

Disturb not thou its silent deeps,
Nor yet its gleaming shallows,
The heavenly rest upon its breast,
The memories it hallows.

The place is more to us than you,
Who have been goers, comers;
For we have lived our lives in it—
Its winters and its summers.

We knew it all when we were young,
And that sets memory sighing,
For now, with bairns about our knees,
The valley where we're dying.

Oh, touch it not! but let it be
As nature has arrayed it;
As softening time has sanctified,
And poet's fancy made it.

A vale where world-worn weary feet
May come to rest or roam in;
Where pilgrim love has found so much,
And *we* have found a home in.

AUTUMN LEAVES.

WHAT sadness clothes the falling year
When skies are red and woods are sere,
And joys are fled that late were here,
And only mournful winds are calling.
When sorrow's song is heard for mirth,—
For saddest thoughts have sweetest birth
When autumn leaves are falling.

'Twas down beside the Fairy Well
Alone came gentle Isobel
To meet her lover in the dell,
When evening winds were softly calling.
No other sound in earth or air
Disturbed the silence everywhere,
While autumn leaves were falling.

And where she came the golden sheen
Of arrowy sunset struck between
Thick autumn branches red and green,
  While through them all the winds were calling;
And all around her and above—
Dead symbols of a summer's love—
  The autumn leaves were falling.

Whatever way she chose to take,
The woodland for her beauty's sake
Showed lovelier, and strove to make
  (While gentle winds were softly calling)
A picture that might well beseem
The vision of some Danäe dream,
  The gold about her falling.

At length, beside the Well she came,
And there with trembling heart aflame,
'Twixt maiden love and maiden shame
  (The whispering winds around her calling)
She listen'd, till through lips apart
She heard the beating of her heart,
  While autumn leaves were falling.

And waiting in that lonely place,
A trouble falls upon her face,
For evening shadows grow apace,

And murmuring winds are round her calling.
The hour is past! why comes he not?
Can love like summer be forgot
When autumn leaves are falling?

Ah never! never! love abides
Through life and death, though all besides
Should perish in earth's shifting tides,
And restless winds for ever calling.
Love bears a life from May to May
Beyond the reach of earth's decay,
Though autumn leaves be falling.

"The way is long that he must ride,
The Tweed is running deep and wide
Where he must pass"—she will not chide
Though darkling winds are round her calling.
"Has he not waited many a night
For her, and watched the waning light
While autumn leaves were falling?"

Thus as she pleaded, through the wood
A horse sprang riderless, and stood
Splashed to the girths in foam and blood,
The shuddering winds about it calling:
With quivering flanks and face of pain
It shook a broken bridle rein
Where autumn leaves were falling.

She gazed until there seemed to rise
A blinding mist before her eyes,
While overhead, far up the skies,
  She heard the winds of heaven calling,
Till sound and sight and all did seem
To mix and melt into a dream
  Where autumn leaves were falling.

Where restless waters whirl and rave
In foam around the Druid's Cave,
They found him by the lonely wave,
  The moaning winds about him calling,—
And her through morning light they trace
To where upon her upturned face
  The autumn leaves are falling.

Beneath the quiet churchyard sod,
Where shadowy beeches wave and nod
To winds that are the breath of God,
  Through Life and Death for ever calling,
Where all our loves and sorrows run,
Their graves are lying in the sun,
  And autumn leaves are falling.

SELKIRK AFTER FLODDEN.

(A WIDOW'S DIRGE, OCTOBER 1513.)

It's but a month the morn
  Sin' a' was peace and plenty;
Oor hairst was halflins shorn,
  Eident men, and lasses denty.
But noo it's a' distress—
  Never mair a merry meetin';
For half the bairns are faitherless,
  And a' the women greetin'.
    O Flodden Field!

Miles and miles round Selkirk toun,
  Where forest flow'rs are fairest,
Ilka lassie's stricken doun,
  Wi' the fate that fa's the sairest.
A' the lads they used to meet
  By Ettrick braes or Yarrow
Lyin' thrammelt head and feet
  In Brankstone's deadly barrow!
    O Flodden Field!

Frae every cleuch and clan
The best o' the braid Border
Rose like a single man
To meet the royal order.
Oor Burgh toun itsel'
Sent its seventy doun the glen;
Ask Fletcher[1] how they fell,
Bravely fechting, ane to ten!
O Flodden Field!

Round about their gallant king,
For countrie and for croon,
Stude the dauntless Border ring,
Till the last was hackit doun.
I blame na what has been—
They maun fa' that canna flee—
But oh, to see what I hae seen,
To see what now I see!
O Flodden Field!

The souters a' fu' croose,
O'er their leather and their lingle,
Wi' their shoon in ilka hoose,
Sat contentit round the ingle.

[1] The name of the man who brought an English flag back to Selkirk from Flodden. Four brothers of that name are said to have perished in the battle.

Noo there's naething left but dool,—
Never mair their wark will cheer them;
In Flodden's bluidy pool
They'll naether walt nor wear them!
O Flodden Field!

Whar the weavers used to meet,
In ilka bieldy corner,
Noo there's nane in a' the street,
Savin' here and there a mourner,
Walkin' lanely as a wraith,
Or if she meet anither,
Just a word below their braith
O' some slauchtered son or brither!
O Flodden Field!

There stands the gudeman's loom
That used tae gang sae cheerie,
Untentit noo, and toom,
Makin' a' the hoose sae eerie,
Till the sicht I canna dree;
For the shuttles lyin' dumb
Speak the loudlier to me
O' him that wunna come.
O Flodden Field!

Sae at nicht I cover't o'er,
Just to haud it frae my e'en,
But I haena yet the pow'r
To forget what it has been;
And I listen through the hoose
For the chappin' o' the lay,
Till the scrapin' o' a moose
Taks my very braith away.
O Flodden Field!

Then I turn to sister Jean,
And my airms aboot her twine,
And I kiss her sleepless e'en,
For her heart's as sair as mine,—
A heart ance fu' o' fun,
And hands that ne'er were idle,
Wi' a' her cleedin' spun
Against her Jamie's bridal.
O Flodden Field!

Noo we've naether hands nor hairt—
In oor grief the wark's forgotten,
Tho' it's wantit every airt,
And the craps are lyin' rotten.

War's awesome blast's gane by,
And left a land forlorn;
In daith's dool hairst they lie,
The shearers an' the shorn.
O Flodden Field!

Wi' winter creepin' near us,
When the nichts are drear an' lang,
Nane to help us, nane to hear us,
On the weary gate we gang!
Lord o' the quick an' deed,
Sin' oor ain we canna see,
In mercy mak gude speed,
And bring us whar they be,
Far, far frae Flodden Field!

RETREAT IN YARROW.

DOBB'S LINN.

In the green bosom of the sunny hills,
Far from the weary sound of human ills,
Where silence sleepeth,
Where nothing breaks the still and charmèd hours,
Save whispering mountain stream that 'neath the flowers
For ever creepeth.

In the green bosom of the sunny hills,
There let me live: where dewy freshness fills
The stainless sky,—
Where, out of very love, the mighty breeze
That wildly wanders over heaving seas
Lies down to die.

There let me live, there let me watch on high
Wild winter send adown the stormy sky
His howling crew.
Or when from heaven in the perfect time
Great summer sheddeth in her rosy prime
Joy-tears of dew.

My teachers are the hills; no truth that feigns
A subtle wisdom drawn from weary brains
With laboured care,
But nature's teaching, that from daisied sod
To lark-sung heights can find the love of God
Plain written everywhere.

My God is in the hills; and men have left
Earth's temples, when of house and home bereft
In truth's despair,
To seek among the hills, in hunted bands,
God's higher temple never built with hands,
And found it there.

Oh silent Hills! oh everlasting Hills!
Whether the summer clothes or winter chills
Thy holy brow!
Worshipping God for ever, while the breath
Of man dies out on meat that perisheth,
How beautiful art thou!

The restless fevered wave of human life
Is echoing down the ages, but the strife
Disturbs not thee.
Oh mountain! sending up thy ceaseless prayer,
Fervently silent, through the charmèd air
Of heaven's blue sea.

The birth, the glory, or the fall of nations
Is naught to thee! delirious generations
Ceasing never!
Rave onward, and thou heedest not the chase,
But lookest up serenely in the face
Of God for ever!

BIRKHILL.

PARTED IN YARROW.

POOR Peggie sits beside the fire,
Black sorrow at her bosom knocking,
Till, fighting with her heart's desire,
Above her busy knitting-wire
The tear-drop falls upon her stocking.

"Oh! when will he come back to me?"
She sighs aloud, all hope forsaking;
Then, taking heart, she cries, "But he,
My own true love, where'er he be,
He was not born for promise-breaking."

Then back beside her work again,
She sings some old-world song to cheer her:
Some ballad, bitter-sweet with pain,
Of banished lover, fond and fain,—
Oh would, my heart, that I could hear her!

Fierce drifts the snow down Deuchar brae,
The winter wind behind it snarling,
O'er hill and valley, night and day:
It tells me of the weary way
That lies between me and my darling.

But plighted hearts are hard to break,
Though for a time they may be parted:
Though friends may fail and fortune shake,
We'll cling the closer for love's sake;
So, Peggie, never be down-hearted!

Sing on, sweetheart! Misfortune's blast
Will sometimes make the prospect dreary;
But fiercest storm is soonest past,—
The day's at hand when firm and fast
I'll clasp thee to my bosom, dearie!

SAINT MARY'S LAKE (YARROW).

Peace on the Lake, and peace within my heart:
Each time I see thee gives a firmer hold
To that sweet influence that made thee part
Of my young life; for now, when I am old,
The impress deepens with the gathering years,
Like some rich song, once heard, the soul for ever hears.

Did ever Love's eternal pathos fill
With fiercer fervour legends like to thine?
And now, what silence reigns!—on every hill
No sound but bleating sheep or lowing kine;
Or haply, when the summer noons afford,
The quiet air resounds with praises to the Lord.[1]

Music is holy—the holiest is the best;
And thou hast been to me a quiet song,
A fount of melody within the breast
That would not mix its sacred source with wrong.
Ah, men forget the infinite debt they owe
To those undying mother-lights of long ago!

[1] The open-air service (the Blanket Sermon) is still an institution in the parish of Yarrow.

The flowers beside thy banks can I forget?—
The red-veined vetch, the tender-stemmed bluebell,
The fringed bog-bean, the purple violet,
The trailing stag-moss, golden asphodel?—
Those untamed races of the virgin sod,
That deck, untouched of man, the garden-ground of God.

Nature becomes to him who loves her well
No casual visitor, he seldom sees,
But life's companion, come with him to dwell,
To soothe his sorrows, share his hours of ease:
A jealous lover she, that holds him fast,
In one life-long embrace, till life itself be past.

And so with thee, St Mary's: thou hast been
No passing picture but a living scroll;—
A memory of still waters, pastures green,
Feeding the lamp of God within the soul,
The sweet Sabbatic silence of thy hills—
I see them in my sleep, I hear their murmuring rills.

Through darkened days, in friendless solitude,
Such memories come like the returning dove,
Hope's olive-branch in life's despairing mood,
The soul's undying whisper, "God is Love,"
Till love has conquered; for whate'er befall,
The heart must save us, else we are not saved at all.

Oh could the world but hear thy tranquil teaching,
And in its disputations give less heed
To those vain problems far beyond its reaching,
That chase the troubled soul from creed to creed,
When it might better rest its weary wings
Beside God's holier temple of created things!

A BORDER MAN CONVALESCENT IN LONDON.

(*Husband loquitur.*)

Give me your hand, my darling, and be near me.
So, I've been ill, and raving too, they say;
I'm better and can speak now, sit and hear me—
My head was clear when I awoke to-day.

How strange! through all my fever I've been dreaming
Of days when we were children, you and I,
Romping in sun and wind, with faces beaming
By those sea-pastures 'neath a northern sky.

It seemed so true, my soul must have been there,
Leaving behind this fevered frame of mine ;
I felt and saw things plainly, breathed sea air,
And watched the light upon the far sea-line.

How they have haunted me, these dear retreats !
A thought, a flower, a sound, would set me free,
Beyond the reek and roar of London streets,
To those sweet silent pastures by the sea.

(*Wife loquitur.*)

There ! there ! you must not talk. The dear old places,
So full of memories for you and me,
We'll see again—the old, the kindly faces,
And wander in the fields beside the sea.

(*Husband loquitur.*)

How is it, growing old, that what we've seen
In earliest days should cling to memory yet,
When all the interval of life between,
Compared to *that*, seems easy to forget ?

How life in which we've fought, and fagged, and striven,
Looked back upon, should be but empty noise ;
While far behind it, like the hills of heaven,
Stand out the days when we were girls and boys ?

Happy the life whose youth was in the sun,
And kept from canker in the budding tree ;
I thank my God that ours was so begun
On those dear sunny fields beside the sea.

Our hopes are but our memories reversed ;
'Twere heaven enough, dear heart, for you and me
To live again the life we once rehearsed
In those bright stainless fields beside the sea.

Well ! well ! I will be quiet,—calm your fears,
A sick man with his nurse must needs agree ;
Good-night, my darling, kiss me—What ? In tears ?
You too have loved the fields beside the sea.

ALBEMARLE ST.

Love Poems

(LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC)

"*A Crowd is not Company; And Faces are but a Gallery of Pictures; And Talke but a Tinckling Cymball, where there is no Love.*"—BACON.

HER BEAUTY.

Beautiful? Nay, beauty's self!
What with her can I compare?
Not all the light on Hebe's cheek,
Or Daphne's golden hair:
Her beauty so surpasses aught
That poet-lover ever thought.

Eyes that open slowly wide,
Largely lit with tender blue;
Careless of the world beside,
Eyes that read me through—
Striking deep divinest chords
Of most unutterable words.

Eyes that have a richer flow
Of richer words than words can tell:
Would that it were ever so—
Words might break the spell;
Eloquence that speaketh thus
Maketh speech ridiculous.

But lo! her voice! my heart stands still,
All life's leading pulses stop
That hungry love may drink his fill,
And never lose a drop.
Oh! I could sit by such a door
And watch the steps for evermore.

Voice that haunts me like a psalm
When the singers every one,
Ceasing, leave the soul behind
Though the song be done:
A chant in some cathedral pile
That wreathes about the fretted aisle.

BOWHILL.

LOVE'S EXPOSITORS.

How is it that in all the earth,
All that is beautiful in birth
Or being, seems a part of her?
The waters seem to lisp her name,
Winds whisper it, and all things claim
To be my love's interpreter.

The birds all sing of it. The flowers
Must know these secret thoughts of ours.
  The very air seems laden so
With music of unburdened speech,
That lies for ever out of reach,
  Yet follows me where'er I go.

Singing, she passed me in the wood
But yesterday; unseen I stood,
  And all things stood to see her pass.
The wild-flowers laughed beneath her tread;
I thought the very earth was glad
  To have her shadow on the grass.

Birds followed her, and all things bent
The way her blessed footsteps went,
  And watched her to the very last.
The winds sank down and only sighed,
And eager daisies, open-eyed,
  Stared after her until she passed.

BOWHILL.

A SUMMER SONG.

Sitting on the breezy height
Of the topmost bough,
Bird! O bird! my bonnie bird,
What singest thou?
What the secret of thy heart,
Tell me, bird, now?

I have come thy woods among,
All alone here,
Just to give my heart a tongue
Without stint or fear,—
Come to sing my soul out,
Bird, where none may hear.

My song is love, is love, is love!
Bird, what is thine?
A whisper falls, O bonnie bird,
Down the sweet sunshine,
That softly tells me word for word
Thy song is mine.

O bird, but love is sweet, sweet,
Sweet for me and you,
So sweet that I could sit and sing
A song for ever new,—
Could sit beside thee, bonnie bird,
The whole day through.

THE HAINING, BEECH-HILL WOOD.

ENDYMION.

LAST night, on Latmos as I stood alone,
With eyes uplifted on the jewelled height
Of holy heaven, the golden dream came on—
The dream that dims the sight.

But opens other eyes, past life's extreme,
On regions where the soul can rise unbound
To those strange heights where earth becomes a dream,
And dreams are solid ground.

My soul was led into a silent land
Of shadowy-thoughted beauty, still and sweet—
Led ever onward by an unseen hand
That brought me to her feet.

I knew she stood beside me, though my eyes
To earthly things were blinded everywhere;
I knew when sight came back, without surprise
That I should see her there.

She spoke, and ere I knew my dream had grown
To gorgeous melting masses, like the clouds
That veil Olympus when the day lies down
In gold and purple shrouds.

Through gulfs of misty music darkness fled
In broken waves that tumbled into space:
A moon-like dawn struck upward overhead—
And we were face to face.

Assuredly, unless the gods had sworn
To help man's weakness, sending from above
A more than mortal strength, I had not borne
That rapture of her love.

But suddenly my nature knew a change—
A subtle change. I drank at every breath
The ether of a life all new and strange
Beyond the grasp of death.

Beneath her eyes asunder broke the bars,
My soul was lifted up, as from deep caves
The climbing ocean clutches at the stars
With hungry heaving waves.

From deeper depths than earthly bliss can know,
I felt my life drawn upward like a flame,
When, bending over me to kiss my brow,
She called me by my name.

"Endymion! I am here! Arise! Rejoice!"
Ah then, the outstretched heavens, and this we call
The earth, to me were empty, and her voice
Was ringing through them all!

Hear me, ye gods! while yet I offer up
Another prayer for that hour; for I—
Since I have tasted the immortal cup—
Must drink again or die.

Oh gather up thy golden reins, and lash
The hours to moments through the startled sky,
Great Helios! Strike till all thy team shall flash
From maddened hoof to eye—

Till falls that blessed hour of fading light
What time thy chariot in the western sea
Hath cooled its wheels of fire, and holy night
Brings back that dream to me.

THY RADIANT FACE.

Thy radiant face! When all my darkened sky
Was rent and haggard with the desolate cry,
The bravest human heart could never quell,
What time I lay in sorrow's prison cell,
Death's dusk and awful image sitting by.

I strove in prayer, till prayer without reply
Became a madman's hoarse and empty yell,
When suddenly across death's shadow fell
Thy radiant face!

When all the world had left me, thou wert nigh
With eager hands to save and sanctify;
Oh love, my love, when death's dark waters swell,
Be near me, be the last to say farewell!
That I may see once more before I die
Thy radiant face!

REFLECTION.

Within my lady's eyes I find the whole
Of love's sweet moods reflected perfectly.
The rapturous rest, the deep felicity,
That silent sweet serenity of soul
Love only knows when it has reached its goal,
With nothing left to think of, hear, or see,
That does not answer to the master-key,
Nor falls within love's golden aureole.

Could anything that heaven itself could give her
Make those still eyes of hers more heavenly fair?
Lo! as I look at them, like summer air
That wakens into flame a sleeping river,
Laughter has taken them with light so rare
It would content me well to look for ever.

A RELIC.

Only a woman's right-hand glove,
Six and three-quarters, Courvoisier's make—
For all common purposes useless enough,
Yet dearer for her sweet sake.

Dearer to me for her who filled
Its empty place with a warm white hand—
The hand I have held ere her voice was stilled
In the sleep of the silent land.

Only a glove! yet speaking to me
Of the dear dead days now vanished and fled,
And the face that I never again shall see
Till the grave give back its dead.

An empty glove! yet to me how full
Of the fragrance of days that come no more,
Of memories that make us, and thoughts that rule
Man's life in its inmost core.

The tone of her voice, the pose of her head—
All, all come back at the will's behest;
The music she loved, the books that she read—
Nay, the colours that suited her best.

And oh! that night by the wild sea shore,
With its tears, and its kisses, and vows of love,
When as pledge of the parting promise we swore,
Each gave a glove for a glove.

You laugh! but remember though only a glove,
And to you may no deeper a meaning express,
To me it is changed by the light of that love
To the one sweet thing I possess!

Our souls draw their nurture from many a ground;
And faiths that are different in their roots,
Where the will is right and the heart is sound,
Are much the same in their fruits.

Men get at the truth by different roads,
And must live for the part of it each one sees;
You gather your guides out of orthodox codes,
I mine out of trifles like these.

A trifle, no doubt; but in such a case,
So bathed in the light of a life gone by,
It has entered the region and takes its place
With the things that cannot die!

This trifle to me is of heavenly birth;
No chance, as I take it, but purposely given
To help me to sit somewhat looser to earth,
And closer a little to heaven.

For it seems to bring me so near,—oh so near,
To the face of an angel watching above—
That face of all others I held so dear,
With its yearning eyes of love!

"TILL DEATH DO US PART."

In every Love-treaty, Death goes to the reckoning;
And now he is closing on yours and mine;
We have battled him bravely from line to line,
Till at last he is with us, his lean hand beckoning.

Nearer and nearer his shadow is blackening,
Slowly effacing our life's design;
In every Love-treaty, Death goes to the reckoning,
And now he is closing on yours and mine.

O Love! though my hand on the helm be slackening,
And a heart from a heart is hard to untwine,
Our dark night of sorrow brings brighter awakening;
The conqueror carries a message divine,
Of a treaty where Death has no part in the reckoning,
And Love evermore shall be yours and mine.

WHEN LOVE AND I WERE YOUNG.

"Ces beaux jours, quand j'étais si malheureuse."

Oh starry nights and golden days!
Oh wondrous land of wild amaze!
Through which life's echoes rung;
Fierce fervours filled the earth and sky,
We knew not whence, we cared not why,
When Love and I were young.

But this we knew, the time was blest,
That sweet was waking, sweet was rest,
  That earth's fair blossoms flung
A dreamy fragrance through the land
Where we two wandered, hand in hand,
  When Love and I were young.

And all the wondrous world was new,
And faith was strong, and love was true,
  Unskilled in heart and tongue;
Untaught of wrong in any wise,
The heart lay open in the eyes,
  When Love and I were young.

Let caution shake her callous head
When all her weary rules are read,
  And moral maxims rung!
The wine of life, its tears, its mirth,
Were glorious vintages of earth,
  When Love and I were young.

I counsel not to any wrong;
In every life there's joy and song,
  If it be rightly sung;
Beshrew the blockhead that would teach
That all is wrong within the reach,
  When Life and Love are young.

The carping world may preach and cry,
I care not how they buzz and lie,
The stinging and the stung;
I hold their wisdom and their ways
As hollow yet as in the days
When Love and I were young.

Let art and commerce, church and state,
All that the world holds good and great,
Have each their praises sung;
I'll swear, denounce it as you please,
That life was holier than these
When Love and I were young.

Good-bye! good-bye! they fade and die;
Out of the past I hear the cry,
The hearts to mine that clung!
If all anathemas were hurled,
I'd take their hand against the world,
If Love and I were young.

LOVE'S FLAME.

Come, Shepherd, now my lute's in tune,
What would you I should sing or play?
Some measure laden sweet as June
With langorous odours? Tell me, pray.
Some air to trickle through your soul,
Like dewdrops in the rose's bowl?
No! say'st thou so?
Ah then, love's tender flame,
Perhaps thou hast not known, except in name!

At gloaming by that pleasant rill
Which murmurs to the murmuring shore,
Hast never waited on the hill
Beneath the spreading sycamore,
And, listening for her coming feet,
Heard through thy lips thine own heart beat?
No! say'st thou so?
Ah then, love's quivering flame,
Thou hast not known it, Shepherd, but in name!

Hast never met by ford or field
That maiden, fresh and free from blame,
Beneath whose gaze thy pulses reeled
With sense of unaccustomed shame?
And when to speak you would have come,
Found suddenly that you were dumb!
No! say'st thou so?
Ah then, love's conquering flame
Thou hast not known as yet, except in name!

Say, hast thou never heard a voice
That seemed to you so strange and new,
It made all other sounds but noise
Compared to that you listened to?
As if it held in every breath
The issues of your life or death?
No! say'st thou so?
Ah then, love's piercing flame,
Thou never canst have known it but in name!

Shepherd, adieu! my song is done!
Go to thy bacon and thy beans;
Why should I sing or play to one
Who does not know what Music means?

'Tis love's own language, and as yet
You do not know your alphabet;
No! Shepherd, no!
To you, love's tender flame
Has never been revealed, except in name!

PRITHEE, MADAM.

Prithee, madam, what are you,
That you accept with scorning
Love that is honourable, true,
And constant, night and morning,
Exacting it as beauty's due?

Beauty lures, but love must bind;
And beauty's long unkindness,
Although that love were ten times blind,
Cures him of his blindness—
Gives him back his lucid mind.

Though love, it seems, less pleases you
  Than admiration endless,
You'll find in such a retinue
  Much that is cold and friendless,
Flatterers many, lovers few.

With these I neither sigh nor weep,
  I only give you warning,
That for the future you must keep
  For some one else your scorning;
I'm sick of it. Good-morning!

LOVE'S EXCHANGES.

You praise my beauty, grace, and art,
  O Love; but you are much to blame;
In every line you leave a smart,
  That makes me bow my head in shame.

Whate'er the world may choose to say,
  I look not for such words from you;
I'd throw them from my heart away,
  If you could even prove them true.

World's praise is but a passing mood,
That shifts about with the occasion;
It serves as oft for envy's food,
As that of honest admiration.

In your regard, I set no store
On what, by way of form or feature,
I hold in common, less or more,
With every other human creature.

If Love be blind, as it is said,
What can he know of outward graces?
I care not for the love that's led
A facile slave of pretty faces.

I would not have my love depend
On beauty, were I ten times fairer.
If beauty knew no change or end,
Life asks for something deeper, rarer—

Something that sets the world aside,
Beyond the touch of time or season.
If only love for love abide,
I do not want another reason.

PROMISES.

RAEBURN'S MEADOW,
3d October, Monday, midnight.

I.

CLARA, DEAR,

I can think I see you sitting, half in wonder, half in fear,
With this letter I am writing, in your hand,
Wondering what should make me write in the middle of the night,
And you guess and guess, and cannot understand.

II.

And I will leave you guessing, dearest, till you guess it out
What mightily important news I have to speak about,
That at this unearthly season I should write;
Why I should find no better time to write my friend a letter
Than just close upon the middle of the night.

III.

Ah! before I say another word, I can feel you guess it now,
I can see the sudden thought that lifts a finger to your brow,
And kindles your sweet face with quick surprise:
Yes! darling, your good guessing has just saved me from confessing;
I can see the truth just dawning in your eyes.

IV.

You remember of our promise to each other, Clara mine,
When we came from school together, in the spring of sixty-nine
(Oh that dreary Milburn Junction, where we parted,
Where the heartless shrieking train bore you off in wind and rain,
And left me on the platform broken-hearted).

V.

Our written vow that should be sacred, and in sacred honour kept,
That we should tell our plighted hour, should tell "*before we slept*"

(These the words, for I remember every line);
And now you know the reason why I write at such a season:
You kept your promise, darling; I keep mine.

VI.

His name I need not tell you—you foretold it once before,
Just a year since. You remember of that walk upon the shore,
When on horseback he accosted you and me,
When with faultless intuition, you then whispered your suspicion.
You were right, though I said nothing—it is he.

VII.

It is he. (Oh, yet the thought will haunt me, even in my bliss,
Had God but ruled the issue to another end than this,
Had his love upon another been to fall;
Oh to whom such fate is given, thou dear God send down from heaven
Thine own comfort, for His sake that loved us all.)

VIII.

Well, to-day his younger brother, Alexander, came of age,
So at night they held a monster gathering down at Fernytage,
Where, of course, *he* was dispenser of the cheer,
With his way so frank and hearty, life and soul of all the party,
Looking handsomer than ever, Clara, dear.

IX.

We had been dancing full an hour, when I, to have a rest,
Took advantage of the Lancers going on (which I detest),
When he came and stood beside me near the door—
Asked if I would dance the next in a voice that seemed perplexed,
And a manner I had never seen before.

X.

Well, we hardly had begun (it was a waltz: your aunt was playing)
When he *asked me!* I pretended not to know what he was saying,

For the noise just at the time was running high,
And you know how aunty jingles out that glorious waltz
of Gung'l's:
Oh, that tune will haunt me, Clara, till I die.

XI.

For with slow deliberate whisper he repeated it again,
Till he knew that I had heard him and escape was all
in vain;
Oh, I thought that every moment I would fall;
And I felt that had I spoken but one word I should
have broken
Into tears, and stood confessed before them all.

XII.

And as we danced along I hardly knew where I was
going,—
I seemed to hear the music of another world flowing
To the feet of shadows flitting to and fro;
And, far out of earthly reaching, seemed to hear a voice
beseeching,
Through the echo of a name that I should know.

XIII.

Till at length, with senses reeling, past the power of thought or feeling,
Hearing ever but the accents of a passionate appealing,
I entreated him that he would let me go;
But with firmer voice than ever he only whispered "Never,
Till you answer me that question—Yes or No?"

XIV.

At that moment any other word than "Yes" I could have spoken,
Though what I said I know not—something meaningless and broken;
Yet all at once he ceased to ask me more,
And I heard through noise and whirling only "Thank you, thank you, darling,"
When suddenly he stopped just at the door.

XV.

I was up-stairs in a moment, where I locked the door behind me;
Oh, relief to be alone at last, where nobody could find me,—

To be again secure from every eye;
I could keep my heart no more, so sat down just on the floor,
And, I hardly need to tell you, had a cry.

XVI.

Of course I never dreamt of going down again to dance,
So put on my shawl and bonnet, waiting till I had a chance
Of slipping down when nobody was there,
When I found, to my amazement, he was sitting in the casement,
Waiting for me at the window in the stair,—

XVII.

Waiting for me coat-and-hatted, so I could not choose but go,
And in walking home together—well—I did not answer "No";
O Clara, dearest Clara, how I love him!
I could lie in death's embrace leaning over that dear face,
And shed my very soul in tears above him.

TIME.

I. PRESTO.

When we two meet, Time flies,
Hours shrink to half their size;
Fast as an eagle's flight
They pass into the night,
Soon lost in darkening skies.

Could we but close Time's eyes,
Or coax the crabbed wight
To turn away his sight
When we two meet!

Alas! to all our cries
He never once replies;
And yet in his despite
Love can assert its might:
Time's power to harm us dies
When we two meet.

II. LARGO.

When you are gone, Time creeps,
Until he all but sleeps,
Lets drop his drowsy head
Like one on poppies fed;
Yes, Time that bounds and leaps

When you are here, scarce keeps
His feet in motion, weeps
Because his feet are lead,
When you are gone.

His lazy sickle sweeps
Life's fragrance into heaps
Of flowers whose bloom is shed.
His ways are sick and dead;
I care not what he reaps
When you are gone.

LOVE IS ENOUGH.

Oh, come away from earthly noise;
What are all its shallow joys
When love has lit the heart?—the light that renders
Earth's best gifts but tinsel splendours,
And all her prizes but the toys
Of full-grown children. Unto you and me
Love, love alone is the reality—
All beside but empty roar,
The barren billows of a bellowing sea
Breaking for ever on a heedless shore—
Mere noise; no more, no more.

Then come away and let it be;
Love is enough for you and me.
Yea, though the world's foundations rock
And stagger to the final shock,
And earth be swallowed in the sea;
Though Nature's laws should break their trust,
And bring the worlds to primal dust—
If only love be left—as so it must—
It is enough for you and me.

Love that lifts us, love that dowers
With purer riches higher powers!
That purges vision to the starry sight
Of things immortal! love that showers
Upon the poorest life a grander light
Than bathes this earth of ours.

Oh, to be thus for evermore!
With her head upon my breast,
My little bird in her chosen nest
Of circling arms, at rest, at rest;
Forgetting all we have possest,
Learning alone love's lore;
To hold for ever in embrace
The speechless beauty of her face;
Ever striving to divine
The heavenly things her eyes are saying,
Looking into mine.

Those eyes of hers, that are to me
My arguments for immortality;
For what but something gifted, something crowned
With godlike motive and eternal years,
Could fill, without a word, without a sound,
To shaking fulness Love's immortal cup

With language that the spirit only hears—
Bringing its speechless treasures up
From those unfathomable spheres
That lie far down beneath the source of tears.

I SAT WITH HER HAND IN MINE.

I SAT with her hand in mine,
Last night when the sun went down;
Our hearts were full of love's light divine,
The light of life and the crown;
My soul spoke only to hers,
And the listening heavens above,
While up through her eyes for ever
Answered the speechless river
Of her love.

No word between us arose—
Wherefore at all the need?
For what are words to the heart that knows
It loves, and is loved indeed?

But I sware in my heart for her,
To the listening heavens above,
While up through her eyes for ever
Answered the speechless river
Of her love.

ELECTIVE AFFINITY.

Once, only once, he bent him low,
And gazèd in mine eyes—oh bliss!
To feel the fainting overflow
Of my soul falling into his,
Silent as falling snow.

His voice most tremulously touches
My very furthest verge of mind;
And in his aspect something vouches
Every utterance; for behind
His eye the spirit couches.

His speech like music chaineth me,
His words are not as other words.
Oh blissfully! oh peacefully!
They fall into my heart like white-winged birds
That light upon the sea.

And from his lips' most careless flow
A breath as if from heaven doth sweep
Across my soul, as from below
Great gulfs of harmony molten-deep,
A voice doth come and go.

His thought unconsciously awaketh
Strange newly-born affinities
Between my thought and his, and maketh
A perfect unity of bliss,
Till life within me shaketh.

High-reaching thoughts, a flaming scroll
Of living words, that gleam and flash
Far up to reason's ultimate pole,
Till in my blood I hear the clash
Of his imperial soul!

Once, only once, he bent him low,
And gazèd in mine eyes—oh bliss!
To feel the fainting overflow
Of my soul falling into his,
Silent as falling snow.

CAROLINE.

I.

YES, that whisper you let fall
In a flash revealed it all;
But your hint I must respectfully decline—
For I still accept that "No"
That you gave me years ago,
As a final overthrow,
Caroline.

II.

But your secret, never fear,
I shall keep it, Carry dear,
If 'twere only for the sake of "Auld Langsyne";
I could never now abuse it,
Only, if I should refuse it,
I'm afraid you must excuse it,
Caroline.

III.

But you're sure to find, dear Carry,
Some one else that you can marry,
With a temper more compatible than mine;
You're superb in that pale pearl,
And you're yet a pretty girl
When your hair is well in curl,
Caroline.

IV.

With that exquisite soprano,
And your touch on the piano,
Not to mention other talents quite as fine,
Your success should be complete;
Then those eyes, when they entreat,
Might bring emp'rors to your feet,
Caroline.

V.

But you must not hope to see
Further worship now from me,
For I cannot kneel again at the old shrine;
Though the temple, I concede,
Is still very fine indeed,
I have somewhat changed my creed,
Caroline.

VI.

Things are not with you and me
What they were at twenty-three;
I'm now thirty (*entre nous*, you're twenty-nine);
Youth is rash, and blind, and bolder,
And you know as hearts grow older
Life is slower, blood is colder,
Caroline.

VII.

Then, again, folk's views will alter;
Now the matrimonial halter
Looks to me, if not more earthly, less divine:
Things look hardly quite so rosy;
Do you know I'm dropping poesy?
And—fact is, I'm getting prosy,
Caroline.

VIII.

You think *now* I'll do you credit;
Tell me, has some gossip said it?
Or has the thought in any part been thine?
I am curious to know
To whose offices I owe
The good word that's changed you so,
Caroline.

IX.

I can't think what it can be
That has brought you back to me,—
I should like to hear the reasons you assign;
But we need not now debate
What can ne'er affect our fate,
For the change comes now too late,
Caroline.

X.

Yes, too late. Love's not a flower
One can grow at any hour
(At any rate it is not so with mine);
And when, reared with careful pain,
It is killed with wind and rain,
It will hardly come again,
Caroline.

XI.

Ah! the ghostly past, you see,
Raises up 'twixt you and me
A vague something that mere words will not define;
I can see through closèd lids
Something standing that forbids
(Hearts have eyes as well as heads),
Caroline.

XII.

But, away with vain regret,
You, I know, will soon forget;
As for me, about past days I can't repine;
Though they touched a tender string,
I was honest, and they bring
Not the vestige of a sting,
Caroline.

XIII.

But, dear Carry, have a care
In your next *petite affaire*,
For this little imp of Love we call divine;
This little high and mighty
Wayward whelp of Aphrodite
Will sometimes turn and bite ye,
Caroline.

A FAREWELL PROPOSAL.

FAREWELL? but stay! if words say what they mean,
The spirit of this word defeats the letter;
For if 'twere not to say, 'tis plainly seen
There's many a heart would doubtlessly fare better.

It stands confessed, recorded in love's lore,
Divided love's an undivided curse;
Let sighs and tears attest the wide world o'er
That hearts compelled to say farewell, fare worse.

Farewell! 'tis but a phrase of mortal birth;
Heaven could not be where such a sound was heard.
Tell me, dear heart, shall we bring heaven to earth,
And say farewell for ever to the word?

AFTER THE HOLIDAY.

What shall I do for the wrong I have done her?
Why did she hide her heart so long,
And never gave warning or word I had won her,
Till reading together that farewell song?

Oh, would that of parting we never had spoken;
She might have forgot it, and all been well,
And the passion-cloud passed overhead unbroken—
But how could I hinder it? How could I tell?

How could I know what her heart was concealing?
She laughed at love-making the whole day long;
With never a hint of more serious feeling,
How could I know I was doing her wrong?

Was she cheating herself with her own delusion
Right up to that moment when reading alone?
To her maidenly shame and my utter confusion,
The tear-gates burst and the mask was thrown.

Then what could I do with her head on my shoulder,
Her great grey eyes looking up into mine?
Oh, what was I thinking of not to have told her?—
Yet how to have done so? She made no sign.

I thought she was jesting, as I was doing;
That our walks and our talks and our readings in rhyme,
Our stately politeness, and pastoral wooing,
Were only employments for holiday time.

Oh, heart of a woman! for who can sound it?
How hard but to touch it, even in play,
And leave it exactly the same as you found it,
Without something added or taken away.

To think that an unforeseen trifle like this
Should hamper a soul in a serious sense,
Propounding a question for bale or for bliss,
So full of a deathless consequence.

Is Love only Fate with a different name?
'Twere better to know it before we begin,
Than suddenly find that the carefullest game
Is out of our hands when the heart comes in.

The act of a moment! a word! a touch!—
Too kindly a look in the eyes—may be
Just a scruple put into the scales too much,
And the balance is struck in eternity!

A DEBT OF HONOUR.

Stand back! and let me forward there;
Stand back, I say! I cannot brook
The salaried stranger's well-meant prayer,
And hackneyed phrases from the book,

Across the corpse of him I loved;
Stand back, and keep official grief
For those who need it, or approv't;—
To me it cannot give relief.

One little moment I will crave,
One little moment let me speak;
I cannot stand beside his grave
In silence, or my heart will break.

Forgive me if I seem to take
  Your priestly office thus away;
The sole excuse that I can make—
  I have the larger debt to pay.

He stood beside me in my need,
  A tested friend when friendship breaks,—
The test that shakes the Christless creed,
  Forsaking what the world forsakes.

'Tis right that I should tell, who know
  What few could know or understand,
How great he was when here below,
  Who now sits down at God's right hand.

For his was not the good that turns
  Its grandest side to earthly eyes—
Rather the steady flame that burns
  Within the secret sanctuaries.

No, friend, you could not know him much;
  You judged him right, his views were broad;
He shunned the shackles—would not touch
  What circumscribed the Church of God.

You did not see the heart that yearned
Beyond the limits of your creed,
But half suspected, half discerned,
The sowing of the holier seed.

The fire that leaps from heart to heart
In silent lightnings flashed abroad,
That worketh not by clerkly art,
But soweth on the winds of God.

'Tis true, you could not well be friends
In higher matters, you and he;
Too blind, perhaps, to present ends,
He failed to see what you could see.

He valued less those kinds of truth
Creed-guarded, labelled well, and priced;
Trade-marked, and paid for; no, in sooth,
He had not so conceived of Christ.

But where in wretchedness it lay,
Struck dumb with lips and eyes aghast,
His goodness gave him right of way
Where you, friend priest, have seldom passed.

Yes, Truth has many a carpet-knight—
The wordy warrior in dispute
May well look here on him whose fight
Was hand to hand, and foot to foot.

Who stormed a citadel of lies,
Who cut his way through privileged wrong
With that sublime self-sacrifice
Of his, as pure as it was strong.

Who, ready at the highest call,
Rushed madly on opposing spears,
And died upon the breaking wall,
The victor's triumph in his ears,—

The victor's shout, the victor's frown;
And yet I know, when this man fell,
Truth shuddered, and a peal ran down
Of laughter terrible in hell!

Sleep on, brave heart! Thy soul has fled
Where earthly arrow may not reach:
When angels come to claim the dead,
They'll find thy body in the breach.

GOOD-BYE.

We stood together while the bell was ringing,
  There in the busy station by the sea;
Near us, a soldier's wife in tears was clinging
  Close to her husband's side. No word said we,
But looking both away, our own eyes met:
  A quick confusion took me, and a blush
Went up her lovely eyes and face, but yet
  No word was spoken, till there came a rush
  Of hurrying feet, and in the buzz and crush
I held her hand a moment; I forget
What then was said, for speaking was cut short
By first the engine's whistle, then a snort—
'Twas off! O Lord, what trifles, more or less,
Can block a lifelong contract, No, or Yes!

TO NEÆRA.

(OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.)

GOOD-BYE, my love that was—my love that is,
If love could live on earthly food alone,
When all the starry wonder that is his
Is faded out and gone;
For you his robes of light are worn away,
A common creature now, made of the common clay.

The word, the gesture, the unconscious touch,
That love with such a meaning could endow,
The little kindnesses that meant so much—
All, all are vanished now;
The haggard present, like a mocking fiend,
Points at the past, and cries, "For you the fruit is gleaned."

Stand still, and let me see once more the eyes
That broke upon me like the dawn of day,
The glorious creature, clad in angel's guise,
That stole my heart away;
The face that once looked fondly into mine,
And set my clinging soul ablaze with love's new wine.

Oh, was I robbed alike of sense and sight,
These months, when every trifle gave a theme
To keep love's altar burning day and night;
Or was it all a dream?
Can that which once was true be true no more;
Or was it but truth's mask some evil demon wore?

Those summer rambles with a favourite book,
The music that made love an open scroll,
Those swift interpretations of a look
That flashed from soul to soul;
Those rapturous encounters of the mind,
When thought leaps up to thought, and leaves the word behind.

But wherefore speak? Let's break the unholy ban,
Since thou hast torn away the sacred root,
Which makes the difference 'twixt the heart of man
And instinct of the brute:
Since love's most hallowed portion may not be,
Give whom you will the rest,—Good-bye, 'tis not for me.

A FAREWELL.

FAREWELL! yet not for ever! When at last
The world has worn its weary servant out,
A bait no longer worth its while to cast
Across the seething rout,
Come back to me. Though all the world should flout,
Come back! and I will help thee with thy load.
The saddening years may yield the better thought,
And tears for thy first love bring back thy heart to God.

LOVE QUESTIONINGS.

A SONG.[1]

Ask me no more, for Love can never show
A reason why her heart should come or go;
That mine doth beat for thee is all I know—
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more, dear heart—Love reasons none;
Nay, Reason's self, beneath Love's mightier sun,
Abandons all her reasons, one by one—
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more; but say, if we could know
Whence all Love's secret subtle sources flow—
Answer me, sweet, would Love be sweeter so?—
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more; like flowers beneath the sod
That wait for summer, Love in its abode
Beyond our utmost will is moved of God—
Ask me no more.

[1] After Thomas Carew, 1580-1639.

LOVE'S FETTERS.

How can you go? What once you gave to me,
How can you give to others? No, love, no!
Ask at your heart if such a thing can be—
You cannot go!

Where would you go? Is there another hand
Could help you, comfort you, or soothe you so—
Stand by you with more faith than I can stand?
Where would you go?

Think ere you go! Should sickness fall on thee—
If, when the lamp of life is burning low,
Too late, O love, your heart should call for me,
Think ere you go.

'Twere wrong to go. Look at the lowered life!
Your past will haunt you, taunt you, like a foe,
And fill your heart with daily fret and strife—
You should not go.

Why would you go? Remember your first vow,
Close by the door there, love's first overflow!
Your head upon my shoulder, you know how.
You must not go.

Say, would you go? Can you, while life endures,
Forget that hour when passion-pale as snow,
Through love's first tears you whispered "I am yours."
Say, would you go?

You could not go! Reft of the sacred store
Which life and love have taken years to grow,
Our world were worse than blank. No more, no more!
You shall not go!

LOVE'S REJOINDER.

"There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned."

Why do I love you? Why do rivers run?
Why does the north wind rage, the south wind sigh?
Why loves the earth to bask beneath the sun?
These follow but their nature, so do I.

How do the flowers love—every flower its season?
Why loves the far-off hill its opal mist?
The birds sing out their love, but give no reason—
It is enough for these that they exist.

As comes in spring the murmur of the dove,
As song of lark that cleaves the summer sky,
My heart so sings, so clings to thee, my love,
And I can give no better reason why.

It is not for your beauty, nor for pleasure,
Your matchless form, nor yet your balanced mind;
For each of these is but an earthly measure
For that which leaves earth's measures all behind.

Love, life, and death are of the things that come
Without our will, our effort, or our art;
In their unbidden presence man is dumb,
For these are masters never man could thwart.

What do we know of love?—its why, or whence?
We only know it flashes from the gloom
Of things outside our sanction or our sense;
And when it does we stand beside our doom.

Under the rich man's roof, or poor man's rafter,
When love has entered in, for ill or well,
That moment stamps itself on man's hereafter,
Whatever name he gives it—heaven or hell.

For though it cannot be but love's first seed
Should fall on earthly soil, and earth must handsel it,
Transplanted into man's immortal creed,
Time may defy eternity to cancel it.

And though love lies concealed in blinding light
That baffles reason, mocks the poet's prayer
For power to tell its infinite depth and height,
Content, we still can breathe its blessed air.

Let it suffice for you and me, that each
Heart knows its secret, loves it not less well,
Because it lies too deep, too dear for speech—
It would be less than love if we could tell.

BEAUTY THOU HAST.

Beauty thou hast, but what is that to me
More than to all the world, who are awake
To beauty's power, and glad for beauty's sake?
Since every creature that has sight to see
Must lift enchanted eyes to such as thee.
As long as light shall play and pass and break
Across God-fashioned faces, yours must take
The world along with it, where'er it be.

Yet, when I hear them praising to the skies
Your marble throat, your bronze abundant hair,
Your lips, your brow, the light within your eyes!
Their words pass by me like the idle air.
What is the glory of the outward wall,
Beside the dear kind heart behind it all?

WHEN I AM DEAD.

When I am dead, and all my heart's distress
Lies in the sweet earth's green forgetfulness,
I care not, love, if all the world go by
My quiet grave without a word or sigh,
If thou but think of me with gentleness.

World's praise or blame is nothing, hit or miss:
Love is alone the measure of our bliss,
And safe within love's heart my name will lie
When I am dead.

To thee, my darling, all will seem amiss,
Till gentle time shall help thee to dismiss
Death's gloom; for that, too, has its time to die,
And sorrow's thought grows hallowed by-and-bye.
Take courage, then, dear suffering heart: Read this
When I am dead.

Miscellaneous Poems

GIOTTO'S CAMPANILE AND BELLS OF FLORENCE.

WHAT magic hangs about thee, dear old tower,
That when I look upon thee, face to face,
Thy beauteous presence wields a mystic power
That binds me to the place?

Something beyond thy sweet and simple beauty—
Something beyond thy more than human voice,
That seems to speak to all of love and duty—
Bidding the world rejoice.

A something more than strikes the outward ear
Wells through thy mellow music, driving hence
All earthly thoughts, till heaven's voice I hear
Touching the inner sense.

A fitting voice for thee, thou white-robed angel,
Standing in marble purity so fair,
For ever sending forth thy sweet evangel
Up through the summer air.

Could I but tell the world what thou art saying,
And in some strong undying way unload
Thy rapture,—all that thou art singing, praying,
In the sweet light of God!

Art thou of earth, or one of heaven's choir,
Holding a consecrated soul up there,
Uplifting to the heaven of thy desire
Thy voice of song and prayer?

Tell us—for thou art nearer God than us,
And hast communion of thine own—what balm
Of hidden love is at thy heart that thus
Attunes thy holy psalm?

Or say, art thou a poet, one who borrows
The fire of heaven to wing his words with power,
And sitteth, singing his immortal sorrows,
Up in his heart's white tower?

Say, art thou one of that immortal throng—
One giving all for nothing he can take;
Who thankless drains a bleeding heart of song
For this poor world's sake?

Thou hast a poet's power upon me, and,
Beneath thy hallowed voice, sweet tears are shed;
And willing memory at thy command
Gives back her buried dead.

Again my soul is bathed as if with dew
Of that sweet time that brings a heavenly mood,
And gathers round it all it ever knew
Of beautiful and good.

Again the past, at thine enchantment, brings
Her keys, and all my soul within me waits,
While heavenly troops of long-forgotten things
Pass through the golden gates.

Ring on! ring out your riches, holy bells!
The weary world has need of all your song;
Your soothing voice of saintly sorrow tells
No tale of earthly wrong.

Ring on! ye lead us to the higher life;
Though hearts are sere, and sorrowing eyes are wet,
We follow you, or, dying in the strife,
Shall win the heavens yet.

FLORENCE.

THE FLOWER'S MESSAGE.

A WANDERER once, flower-gathering in the land
Where Proserpine, beside the midland sea,
Wove garlands of the star-anemone,
Descried the flower he looked for, close at hand,
Yet guarded from him by a prickly strand
Of wreathed acanthus; thorns of that same tree
Men made a crown of once in Galilee,
To mock the King they could not understand.

Was it the red blood colour of the flower,
So near the thorns, that crossed and interlaced it,
That stayed his eager hand with unseen power,
Bidding him leave the prize where God had placed it,
And hold more lightly every earthly dower
That perishes when we have once embraced it?

AMALFI.

RAIN.

Rain! rain!
Oh, sweet Spring rain!
The world has been calling for thee in vain
Till now, and at last thou art with us again.
Oh, how shall we welcome the gentle showers,
The baby-drink of the first-born flowers,
That falls out of heaven as falleth the dew,
And touches the world to beauty anew?
Oh, rain! rain! dost thou feel and see
How the hungering world has been waiting for thee?
How every crack of the earth drinks down
With lips that but late were haggard and brown?
How streamlets whisper, and leaves are shaken,
And winter-sleeping things awaken,
And look around them, and rub their eyes,
And laugh into life at the glad surprise;
How the tongues are loosened that late were dumb,
For "the time of the singing of birds has come";
How every tender flower holds up,

In trembling balance, its tiny cup,
To catch the food that in sultry weather
Must hold its little life together?
Oh, blessings on thee, thou sweet Spring rain,
That callest dead things to life again!

Rain! rain!
Oh, Summer rain!
Tell me why dost thou complain,
And streak with tears my window-pane?
Say, sweet Summer, why disguise
In Winter's garb thy bright blue skies?
Tell me, why shouldst thou be weeping,
When all the world else is keeping
Holiday? When every sound
Is calling on thee to keep the round,
The chatter of swallows beneath the eaves,
The breezy music of murmuring leaves;
While sitting unseen in the odorous larches
The blackbird sends out through the tasselled arches
That song of his, with the deep long note,
As if pouring his soul through his open throat;
And hark! that voice, the sweetest of all
The singers in earth's glad madrigal,
The streamlet that dances down the hill,
To her own sweet voice, at her own sweet will—

In again! out again! leaping along,
Her music is motion, her motion a song.
The stones about her feet rejoice,
Touched by the magic of that voice.
Through ferny-throated fissures gargling,
Of waters into waters warbling.
Nay, the sun himself, despite thy fears,
Is peeping and laughing through thy tears.
Come, come, sweet Summer, and dry thine eyes;
But still through her tears the Summer replies—
"Alas! 'tis not for me to know
Why these sad tears of mine should flow,
Why joy should fill the heart as full
As sorrow does, and overrule
The soul like this. My life, as thine,
Moves to an influence divine—
Bound by the same mysterious bond
To the life behind it, and life beyond,
And so compassed about with its hopes and its fears,
That looking for laughter it falls upon tears—
Yea, and out of its sorrow and sore dismay
Oft finding the path to a brighter day.
Then suffer awhile these tears to flow,
The after heavens will be clearer so."
So sang the Summer as the sweet rain fell;
But the source of her sorrow she could not tell.

Rain! rain!
Wild Winter rain!
Hark at the winds how they howl again
As the rushing waters come down amain,
And lash, and wrestle, and writhe, and hiss—
The fiends must be loose in a night like this.
As for me, I am taking the grim delight
Of facing the elements in their might.
Up here alone, and at such an hour
(It is near midnight in the minster tower),
On the great cathedral wall I stand,
Holding like death with either hand,
Watching the stormy demons fight
(God help the houseless in such a night).
Though I cling to the feet of the hugely colossal
Proportions of Angelo's giant apostle;
Though I stand by the base of the big stone piers
That have borne the shock and the passion of years,—
The stones that have held, high up in the air,
The great bell tower for centuries there,—
Yet I tremble to think, as the storm grows apace,
That some night the pillars will fall from their place
And—— Merciful God! what a flash was there!
How it seemed to leap out of the central stair,
And light for a moment with lurid fire
Every point of the great north spire,

Then danced down the roof from shelf to shelf,
While I had not a hand to cross myself;
And close on the back of it, over and under,
Leapt up in a moment the quick, short thunder,
Till the earth seemed to reel, as if inwardly shaken
With dread at the thought of a life forsaken—
As if God had thrown up the reins of the world,
And given it away to be hustled and hurled
Heedless along as the winds compel,
Whether the road be to heaven or hell!
Like a maniac robbed of reason and will,
With never a law of its own to fulfil!
But there goes my cowl! and I stand headbare;
I durst not lift my hand to my hair,
For should I let go for a moment—pshaw!
I'm over the roof like a bundle of straw
For the storm-fiends to hoot at, and batter, and ban,
And St Clement's is short of a sacristan.
So I cling to the legs of St Peter, in stone
(He's a rock up here, let the heathen rage on);
Ay, would that I had the heretic here,
With his mouthing omniscience and creedless sneer,
An hour on the roof might bring to a pause
His placid expoundings of Nature's laws,
And teach him the diff'rence in heaven's own way
'Twixt God the potter and Man the clay.

But hark up there, in the minster tower
The big bell booms out the midnight hour,
While the storm leaps up as if ready to fight,
That none but himself shall be heard to-night;
For out of the twelve I heard but four—
The wind ran away with the rest in a roar,
And battered and beat them about the spire;
And, clashing and tossing them higher and higher,
Tore them to shreds, far up in the air,
Till they died out at last in a yell of despair;
And the torrent still pours on the roof like a river,
As if heaven had decreed it should rain for ever,
Till the grinning stone devil on the western spout
Through his huge red throat sends the waters out
With a glut and a gurgle that seems to say,
"I like it, I like it—storm away!"
While over his head, in his niche up there,
With eyes uplifted in endless prayer,
Kneels godly Augustine, just as when
He pleaded on earth for the souls of men.
His gaze seems to pierce through the lurid levens
Far into the plains of the restful heavens,
With the greatness about him, and calm control,
The silent repose of a sovereign soul.
As I look on his face I seem to hear
His grand old prayer, serene and clear—

"Blest be the storm, whatever it be,
That drives us at last, O God, to Thee!"
And the words I so often have sung and said
Seemed to strike anew as I bowed my head
To the sweetest of saints and the best of men,
And my heart responded "Amen! Amen!"

THE DAUGHTER.

My little daughter grows apace,
  Her dolls are now quite out of date;
It seems that I must take their place,
  We have become such friends of late—
  We might be ministers of state,
Discussing projects of great peril,
  Such strange new questionings dilate
The beauty of my little girl.

How tall she grows! What subtle grace
  Doth every movement animate;
With garments gathered for the race
  She stands, a goddess slim and straight.

Young Artemis, when *she* was eight,
Among the myrtle-bloom and laurel—
I doubt if she could more than mate
The beauty of my little girl.

The baby passes from her face,
Leaving the lines more delicate,
Till in her features I can trace
Her mother's smile, serene, sedate.
'Tis something at the hands of fate,
To watch the onward years unfurl
Each line which goes to consecrate
The beauty of my little girl.

ENVOI.

Lord! hear me, as in prayer I wait:
Thou givest all; guard Thou my pearl;
And, when Thou countest at the Gate
Thy jewels, count my little girl.

AOEDE.

Bend thou thine eyes on me,
  Sweet Poesy, and give me of thy grace;
I leave the blustering world and turn to thee,
  To seek the holy smile upon thy face:
Without thee life were wretched and forlore—
Touch thou my heart once more.

The world is heedless now,
  And careth not to watch thy beauteous ways;
They cannot see the light upon thy brow,
  As did thy worshippers in olden days:
Gone, like a dream, thy sacred Helicon,
And all the light thereon!

Thy grove, thy shaded well,
  No more remembered in the world's cold sense,
Oh teach thou me, thy servant, yet to dwell
  Within the reach of thy sweet influence;
Nor grovel down into the soul that feeds
Only on mortal needs!

If all thy songs be sung,
  The blame is ours: the world is changed and old;
But thou, a maid immortal, ever young,
  Thou changest not—thou wilt not yet be cold
To such as love thee in the heart's true way—
Then stay, sweet goddess, stay!

They live that love thee yet.
  Here, at thy feet, beholding such an one,
Accept his vows: though all the world forget,
  He swears that while within his veins shall run
The blood of life, that life is only thine,
By all thy ways divine!

I'd rather live with thee
  A creedless life—like those that long ago
Crowned thee with flowers in vine-trailed Thessaly—
  Than join with men that creep their creeds below,
Clothing in sanctity their mammon lies
And hideous uncharities!

I'd rather live apart
  In poverty—of all the world unknown—
Might I but hear thy voice within my heart
  The while I walked in summer woods alone.
I care not what blind fortune shall assign
If thou art only mine.

SPRING.

I STAND alone among the pines in May,
In that sweet time when earliest bees are humming,
And birds are loudest on the budding spray,
And Summer sends in front a glorious day
To tell the longing year that she is coming.
Her heart is full because of her delay:
So full that she must weep sweet dews, that fall
In blissful tears through all the lonely night.
Oh Thou Eternal Source of our delight,
Creator and Controller of it all!
I thank Thee here, that I, Thy creature too,
A world-worn weary heart, can rest awhile,
And worship Thee, as Thy dumb creatures do,
In silent thankfulness that knows no guile.

BOWHILL.

AN EXILE IN SIBERIA.

(The Kara Mines.[1])

He had a happy home, once on a time,
A house made holy with the silvery chime
Of children's laughter; sounds that cling and climb

About the shattered memories of men
Once banished from them, never more again
To come within their kindly human ken.

So happy once! Now, neither joy nor fear,
Nor any sorrow life may bring him near,
Can cheat him of another smile or tear.

He had a fair and goodly garden too,
Where he had mingled flowers of homelier hue
With many, to his climate strange and new.

Within its walls, seeds of a sunnier clime
Made beautiful the blaze of summer's prime,
And blent their odours with his rose and thyme.

[1] Worked by convict labour for the benefit of the Czar.

Within its walls, love wandered hand in hand,
Mother and children there, a happy band,
None happier than he in all the land.

But that is over; wounded from within,
Betrayed by men he sheltered from their sin,
Men dead to ties of kindness or of kin,

The very outcome of his mother's womb
Rose up against him; joined the common spume
That sent him shackled to his living tomb.

His house, wife, children, garden, all have fled;
He sees them now, like spectres from the dead
That haunt his broken heart, his fevered head.

At midnight, in the dim, dream-darkened air,
He sees, within a garden, bleak and bare,
A solitary cypress standing there;

And one lone man, made mad with death's delay,
His hands uplifted, knees upon the clay,
Pleading with God that he might pass that way.

Upon his forehead stands the beaded sweat
Of agony, while still his prayer is met
With one returning word, "Not yet," "Not yet."

See where he falls! a mass of rags and shame,
With none to pity, none that know his name,—
Madness at last has seized his ruined frame.

Look on him, fiends who fatten on his fate!
Join hands and dance, hell-hoofs, and hearts of hate,
God is not mocked, although His hour be late.

POESY.

Poesy, I love thee.
Earth, in endless praise of thee,
Of all the sweet wild ways of thee,
Sings for ever! And my song
Is but another in the throng,
To tell thee how we love thee.
Listen to the singing now
Pouring from the topmost bough
That waves its green above thee!
Downward to thy dewy feet
Where low voices mix and meet,
And winds among the grasses sweet
Whisper that we love thee.

Minstrel mine, I hear thee;
All that loving praise of thine,
All those liquid lays of thine,
I have seen them, I have heard.
Now I give thee thy reward,
Poet, dost thou hear me?
I will not mock thee with a name,
Thankless gifts of earthly fame,
No other joy a-near thee.
I will give thee love for love,
I will keep thy heart above,
And in thy sorrow cheer thee.

I will give thee heavenly food
To sustain the poet's mood,
Wine and oil and holy meat,
That will make thy memory sweet:
Poet, never fear me.
When the days are dark and drear
I will keep thy vision clear;
And in the world's ungrateful fight
I will keep thy heart aright:
Poet, dost thou hear me?

EARLY SUMMER ON THE MEDITERRANEAN.

UNDER the shade of an olive-tree,
In a garden with flowers aglow,
Whose terraces slope to the shining sea,
Which lies like a mirror below,

I lie full length on a tiger skin—
With a skin of my own well browned—
The palms of my hands tucked under my chin,
And my elbows stuck in the ground.

The garden where you, love, and I have been
So many an hour together,
Watching the blue sea's changing sheen
In the bright Bas-Alpine weather.

So soft an air creeps through the trees,
The small leaves tremble none—
Enough just to break with a tempering breeze
The heat of a southern sun.

The grey old olive around me throws
A glamour of golden gloom,
And the air is rich with the breath of the rose,
The jasmine, and orange bloom.

You remember the walk you were wont to admire,
With its roses each side of the way,
Where the pathway ends in a fountain of fire—
The golden acacia?

'Tis there I lie, as in days before,
And dream to the ocean's sound,
As the billows come in on the tideless shore
With a sea-voice deep and round.

'Twixt wave and wave, as the voices float,
Such motionless pauses lie,
I can hear the faint cicala's note,
And the laden bee go by.

And ever again a louder roll—
A wave with a voice of his own—
Comes in with the cry of its breaking soul,
And dies in a long sea-moan.

But out in mid-ocean, miles from the shore,
It is still as still can be,
Leagues upon leagues, an opal floor,
Of the great unbroken sea—

As fair as when creation's rod
Rested from its employ,
When the morning stars and the sons of God
Sang together for joy.

I rest my eyes where, thin and fine,
And far as sight can see,
The utmost belt of the faint sea-line
Touches eternity.

And the soul passing out, as it were in a dream,
Sees all the world anew,
And things unsought for flash and gleam
Within its widened view.

And I think of the kingdoms the sea has seen
In the distant days of yore—
Of the pomps and the splendours that once have been,
Now silent for evermore.

The long dead dynasties of old—
Phœnicia, Greece, and Rome,
And Tyre, that carried her purple and gold
Athwart the Cyprian foam.

Of Egypt's glory, great awhile,
Ere she of passionate breath,
The dread, sweet serpent of old Nile,
Hugged Antony to death.

Before the voice of Greece was hushed
In war's discordant peal,
And all her lyric heart lay crushed
Beneath great Cæsar's heel.

Days when the tuneful world was peace,
And happier deeds were sung,
When all the golden isles of Greece
With rhythmic numbers rung.

Oh waters of the rich-isled East!
'Twas thou that gave them birth,
And rocked upon thy sunny breast
The great ones of the earth.

Where red Ægean fruits hang ripe,
Or where the streamlet pours
Soft music to a shepherd's pipe
On fair Sicilian shores.

'Twas there the immortals spoke, and then
The words that cling and climb,
They echo yet in the hearts of men,
And shall to the end of time.

Thy song, wherever song takes root,
Shall find a vernal birth
With that great language which has put
Its girdle round the earth.

And all who use the mighty tongue
Of England still look back
Where thou across the sea of song
Hast left thy shining track.

Byron, and Landor, and Keats, have caught
The glory of thy name,
And Browning's ægis richly wrought,
Reflects the ancient flame.

Our laureate—melody's own mouth—
By music pure and strong,
"The palms and Temples of the South"
Has wedded to his song.

These sought thee, loved thee, sang of thee,
Drank in thy purer air;
And thou—oh pearl-enamoured sea,
We threw thee a jewel there!

When Shelley's soul, with wings unfurled,
Weary of strife and strain,
Like a thing of light sailed out of the world,
And came no more again.

But hark! the nightingale's voice has come,
And echoes on peach and pine,
And a beetle goes by with the louder hum
That tells of the day's decline.

A breeze comes out of the cloudy tower
Where the sky and the ocean meet,
And the sea-floor breaks into blossom and flower
At the touch of invisible feet.

My dream dissolves like the breaking light
On the wind-struck mirror below,
And I cry to the sea "Good-night, good-night!"
As I rise to the feet and go.

A MODERN MISERERE.

(THE BISHOP, RETURNING FROM A SCIENCE CONGRESS, RUMINATES.)

O LORD, our times are cold and dead,
Religion but a world's show,
Where truth is starved, and hope is fled,
And faith is burning low.
The wisdom of the sweet old days
Is trodden in the common ways.
Miserere Domine!

No doctrine but the kind that's grown
To-day hath any man received:
It must be noisy and new-blown
Before it is believed.
The ripened thought that ruled the past
Is losing hold and falling fast.
Miserere Domine!

Truth, Lord, is crucified afresh
  Upon the modern cross of science,
If not with mangling of the flesh,
  With all the old defiance,—
With just the same ingenious art
And moral blindness of the heart.
  Miserere Domine!

And we must join the vulgar fray,
  And e'en be taught how truth can grow
By men who have forgot to pray
  In blind desire to know.
Lord! how the devil still can harden
With that old apple of the garden!
  Miserere Domine!

The garden, said I? that, alas!
  Has long been cast without the pale
Of modern creeds; effete and crass,
  At best an old wife's tale,
With all its promise, all its glory,
Pruned down to make a children's story.
  Miserere Domine!

They think to break Thy word, forsooth,
By picking here and there a hole;
They scratch the husk of Eden's truth,
And think to reach its soul.
They do not see the sword of flame
Still standing at the gate the same.
Miserere Domine!

Good Lord! that men should sit and burn
Beneath the philosophic doubt,
The learned logic that would turn
Heaven's secrets inside out!
And rearrange our holy things
In self-complacent vapourings.
Miserere Domine!

To sit and listen by the hour
(And feel half guilty by connivance)
To bland concessions of God's power,
His forethought and contrivance,—
The maunderings of the pious hack
Who pats creation on the back.
Miserere Domine!

Or worse, stuffed out with science' saws,
A boasted age's educator,
God s creature proving from God's laws
That there is no Creator!
The things that owe to Thee their force
Turned round to spurn the primal source!
Miserere Domine!

Disciples of the modern schools,
Whose culture scorns the common herd
Of miracle-believing fools,
That all along have erred,
And still obstruct the world's advance
With antiquated ignorance.
Miserere Domine!

Philosophers, who laugh at faith,
And all its miracles despise,
Though miracles of life and death
Stare daily in their eyes.
In faiths that give Thy word the lie,
How fond is their credulity!
Miserere Domine!

Oh teach us, Lord, before we fall
  Too utterly away from Thee,
That knowledge is not all in all,—
  That in our wisdom we
May all things know, and yet for us
Our souls be poor as Lazarus.
    Miserere Domine!

Lord, strike not yet. It cannot be
  But this is temporary froth,—
Upheavings of a troubled sea:
  Earth-darkness, which the growth
Of thy sweet light will purge away,
And chasten to the perfect day.
    Miserere Domine!

FOR THE DEFENCE.

You ask me why I write in verse?
  I cannot tell you why, except for pleasure;
And so your query, put in prose,
  I'll answer, friend, in measure.

I find it easy. There are those
Who cannot help it; hung on music's hinges,
Rhyme follows thought like some old tune
That all your memory tinges.

I do not say their thought is good,
Nor yet can see your reason for supposing
That just because 'tis writ in verse
It *must* be worse than prosing.

There cannot be much difference
Between the verse and prose that's put before us,
If we are but agreed in this,
That both the writers bore us.

And surely there's enough of prose
In life's steep road for those of us who climb it.
Why should you deem it but a fault
That one should try to rhyme it?

There is a happy power in rhyme—
Laugh as you will—that keeps the blood in motion;
A sympathetic pulse, whose life
Beats time to wind and ocean.

A healthful spirit, wild and free,
Though men materialistic may deride it:
Their highest reach of stilted prose
Is starch itself beside it.

There is more virtue in a song
Than all your high-souled scientific asses
Will ever manage to reduce
To its component gases.

You say that every second man
You meet is certain now to be a poet.
I envy your acquaintance, and
Am very pleased to know it.

Statistics is your forte, I know;
You're scrupulously truthful in a high sense.
(Tis sweet to catch a man of prose
Taking poetic licence.)

But never mind, we need them all,
Though they may speak of things you take small heed of;
The poet's wisdom is a kind
The world now stands in need of.

The wisdom that reveres God's ways,
And hates the modern self-sufficient folly,
That would unravel holy things
With fingering most unholy;

The heart that keeps the great broad faith,
Pleading no special form or special gesture,
Prepared to bow before God's truth,
Whatever be its vesture;

Which feels as well as knows the truth,
And does not trouble you with proof pedantic,
Though it may follow it in ways
The world will call romantic;—

We need them all in times like these,
So niggard of disinterested action,
Lest love degrade to bargaining,
And truth be lost in faction.

We need them all, we yield too much,
Submit too meekly to the world's dominion,
And smile and bow and doff our hats
Too humbly to opinion.

We trust too much to rules laid down
By domineering custom and tradition,
Till thought and freedom fall asleep,
Or die of inanition.

We need some rugged natural souls
Who will not trim to the prevailing fashion,
Who must speak out their open thought,
In wholesome, honest passion;

Who will not juggle with the world,
Nor countersign her jaundiced arbitration,
Who sit as loosely to her blame
As to her approbation;

Who hate the creed that seeks itself,
And worships God because the world has said it,—
The holiness that draws on heaven
To prop an earthly credit.

'Tis good sometimes to stand aside,
And strip the world of all those earthly lendings
That make its life a heartless lie
Of hollowest pretendings.

'Tis good to keep within the heart
A room where only one's own soul shall enter,
Yielding the outworks to the world,
Keeping yourself the centre;

A little sanctum set apart,
In which to think a thought or sing a measure,
And stretch your legs and speak your mind,
According to your pleasure.

And if sometimes within the walls
Of my soul's room old tunes will yet be ringing,
Like ghosts that will not rest until
You give them words for singing.

'Tis idle habit, I admit,
And cannot boast of any special mission,
Yet it has uses of a kind
Worthy of recognition.

It would not do if all of us
Were grave professors deep and scientific,
Each thrusting down the other's throat
His favourite specific—

Each vamping up his own pet view,
And then some grand pretentious title give it,
Till we've so many teaching life,
There's no one left to live it.

'Tis right we should have some to sing,
If but to set against the world's long faces,
Lest human nature pine to death
In circumspection's laces.

Give me the sense of life and light,
Of freedom's open air and mountain breezes,
Surrounding all the wandering life
That sings but what it pleases.

It keeps the spirit fresh and young—
God knows we soon enough grow old and cautious,
When poetry, and youth, and fun,
And all sweet things are nauseous.

So I will rhyme, my friend, while young;
If I get old I'll promise you to prose it;
You think this letter long enough,
I dare say, so I'll close it.
I am—
But that I scarcely need
To tell to one that knows it.

THE MODERN SPHINX.

O, RIDDLE hard of solving, ceaseless orb of life revolving,
All-creating, all-dissolving, whence and whither dost thou run?
Canst thou hear earth's song of gladness; cry of pain, and death, and sadness;
All the mirth and all the madness of this world beneath the sun?

With its crowds deceived, deceiving, still the old false hopes believing,
Every step beyond retrieving, leading downward to the grave;
With its endless life-stream flowing, myriads coming, myriads going,
Death but reaps what life is sowing, as the wave blots out the wave.

With its crowds believing nothing, taking earth with all its loathing,
As the spirit's highest clothing, and the final end of all;
Judging man's immortal nature but a dream's distorted feature,
Seeing nothing in his stature over things that breed and crawl.

Must we take the cold and bloodless creed of the contented godless,
The fruitless, flowerless, budless graft of Reason's boasted seed,
While the old, "Yea, God hath spoken," stript of all its heavenly token,
Is cast aside and broken to make room for man's new creed?

Can we give our hearts' compliance to this fate-bound creed of science,
With its sneer of cold defiance, holding prayer a wasted breath,
While deaf to all appealing, every stroke the wheel is dealing
Sends its crowds of victims reeling into dust of dreamless death?

Or, shall we seek soul-quarter in the miserable charter
Of a low, degrading barter—joys of heaven and pains of hell?
As if the God-given banner of a man's immortal honour,
With a price affixed upon her, were a thing to buy and sell!

Shall we bow beneath the preaching of the church's garbled teaching,
With its farce of heavenly reaching over lines it must not pass?
With its multiform complexion; every fierce and wrangling section
Self-asserting a perfection that's denied it in the mass.

Quacks that pour their paid-for thunder through the gates of fear and wonder,
Shall we tear their creeds asunder, toss the fragments to the skies?
Priests and preachers leave behind us, with the windy words that blind us,
Till the light can hardly find us through the mesh of twisted lies?

* * * * * *

Silence, babbler! close beside thee there's a higher word
to guide thee,—
All the creeds that chafe and chide thee are but dust
of passing strife;
Over all earth's fleeting phases, clashing doctrine, swelling
phrases,
God the simpler standard raises of the creed that
was a Life.

That will stand though churches crumble; when the
system-mongers stumble
In their own distracted jumble, that at least will never
fall.
And when science-doctors scout thee, priests denounce,
or bigots flout thee,
Fold the simpler faith about thee, and act justly by
them all.

THE SINGER TO THE CRITIC.

All that you say is fair, critic,
Well meant, both your smile and your frown,
But neither will alter a hair, critic,
The rule I have long laid down.

My thanks for the kindness you've shown, critic,—
  Your work is most faithfully done;
Still I have a faith of my own, critic,
  That I can exchange for none.

You can tell what the time demands, critic,
  The fashions that ebb and flow,—
You will only receive at my hands, critic,
  Such fruit as I choose to grow.

A free and a fetterless flight, critic,
  That fashion could never control,
In the air of its own delight, critic,
  Is the law of the singer's soul.

I shall sing from my inner, own heart, critic,
  And never ask any one's leave,
And shall clothe with my uttermost art, critic,
  The thing I most love and believe.

But the choice must be left to myself, critic,
  And whither I mar it or make it,
I ask neither plaudit nor pelf, critic,—
  The world may leave it or take it.

And when I have done my best, critic,
I shall say to my song—"Adieu!"
To the winds I shall leave the rest, critic,
And turn to my work anew.

Though all that we say or do, critic,
Should pass with us under the sod,
We know that the good and the true, critic,
Is safe in the hands of God.

And the heart's true music will all be, critic,
Caught up in men's hearts again,
As it was, and is, and shall be, critic,
World without end, amen!

ON A PAINTING OF "A SPRING DAY," IN THE SCOTTISH ACADEMY.

Again Spring's gentle warfare wins its way,
And grim retreating Winter hangs afar
His flag of truce on the horizon bar,
Yielding his power to pale Persephone.
Mark how the earth in every budding spray

Conceals the ravages of Winter's war,
In leaf and flower; while many a golden star
Of rich gorse blossom lets her perfume stray,
Her well-armed body-guard around her set,
The serried spearsmen of Plantagenet.
God's benison be with the gracious art
That, on the glowing canvas here unfurled,
Can bring into the city's hungry heart
The freshness and the fragrance of the world.

THE END OF THE ARGUMENT.

I AM a woman, you
Have man's strong vision: yet it may be said
What *we* see, we see clearly, though our view
Be limited.

I feel that I am right,
And yet 'twere vain in me your creed to call
In question; I will hope, on closer sight,
That after all

We differ but in word,
We recognise one God by different name;
And surely hair's-breadth reasoning is absurd
Where faith's the same?

We bow to one great Cause,
One all-pervading Power from sky to sod:
You call it Nature, Force, Eternal Laws,—
I call it God.

You see Him in the power
That guides the floating worlds through utmost space,
And in their shining courses every hour
Keeps all in place.

You search His works about
In ways we women scarce can understand,
Till Earth and Air give all their secrets out
At your command.

Faith is enough for me,
But men must *know*—must watch the Light that plays
Under and over all things like a sea.
I read His ways

In every bird that sings,
In every tangled branch of budding twig,—
For surely God is God of little things
As well as big.

The cold clear light men lay
On things like these is more than ours; but then,
Though we grope darkly, we can find the way
As well as men.

God knows we cannot bring
Such light as yours to teach us what is true,
And, knowing this, makes faith an easier thing
For us than you.

And if we reach one end,
If we with all our searching find out Him,
To fight about the road—and with my friend—
Were idle whim.

But should earth's wisest showing
End not in this, where all true wisdom must,
I leave it; it is not of Heaven's bestowing,
And I can trust.

A NOTE OF CONDOLENCE.

Your dead friend held no settled creed,
You tell me, and "within your heart
The thought still lies—a poisoned seed,
That will not part."

Your friend was mine as well; well known,
Well loved in memory yet; be strong!
The poisoned seed is all your own—
You do him wrong.

His mind was not the facile clay
That, heedless of all fault or flaw,
Accepts the impress of the day
As final law.

From clearer heights he watched the needs
Of ages, rather than of days,
And saw creeds superseding creeds
In endless maze.

Too just a man in such a case,
To claim that he had found a plan
To fit all future time and place!
And every man!

He could no longer deem divine
Those petty compacts that compel
Men's thoughts within a given line
On threat of hell.

Where one would close the door on doubt,
Another bursts the very locks
Respectability points out
As orthodox!

Thus two good men may cast abroad
The seed of what seems rival growth,
Yet each be working for the God
That sent them both.

We see too short a way, my friend,
To give us title to impose
Our special vision, and offend
The sight of those

Who boast like us both eyes and light;
Our daily path is clear and plain:
To fix what lies beyond his sight
Man strives in vain.

Turn how he will, life's limit mocks
His power to pierce the hidden sphere,
Cooped in his little clay-built box
Of "now" and "here."

Besides, what gain to me or you—
What guarantee in all the fight
That from the hundred creeds held true
We choose the right?

Were it not better each to give
The greater issues of his life
In trust to God alone, and live
Outside the strife?

So chose your friend the path he trod,
Unmoved by either clique or clan—
Abiding in that fear of God
Which fears no man.

But he was great, and wise, and good;
Think of the untold crowds by whom
These things are hardly understood,
And of their doom!

The unlearned thousands of the world,
What fate to these would you accord?
Shall these without a thought be hurled
All overboard?

The crew that mans this ship of earth—
The vast, but little tutored host,
That work their passage from their birth—
Shall these be lost?

Believe me, there is many a road
To church and priest alike unknown,
Whereby the ever blessed God
Brings home his own.

THE BISHOP EXHORTETH THE SICK IN HOSPITAL.

(THE SEMI-DELIRIOUS ONE REPLIETH.)

"Audivit Pharisæum cogitantem."—AUG. Serm. 99.

OH saintly soul-salver, I know you well!
You're a gospel prophecy come to light,
The sign and the wonder the Scriptures foretell
When Christianity's husk and shell
Will threaten its heart like a blight.

The day of false prophets who show the road,
In a world deceiving and being deceived,
When the truth shall be trampled and overtrod,
When Mammon shall sit in the temple of God,
And his lie will be believed.

Nay, keep your temper, and hear me out—
A word for a word, it is but fair-play—
Since I've heard with attention most devout
Your censure of me,—too true, no doubt,—
You must hear what I have to say.

If you're only amused there is something gained,
And a debt is paid you have honestly earned;
For think of the times you have entertained
Whole churchfuls of people who never complained,
But suffered you unconcerned.

To me you were better, you're as good as a play
When the temper is up and the lungs are loud,
And the bag-fox sinner is out and away,
To be worried once more in the face of day
Before an admiring crowd.

But to fight an abstraction is no great game
Compared to a sinner in concrete fact;
So I freely forgive the professional flame,
And the roughness of tongue with which you blame,
Though myself am the sinner attacked.

A sinner, alas, I allow; but then
Wherever 'tis made is the charge not true?
Are there any exceptions? Say one in ten?
No! this is the jacket which fits all men.
Then pray, sir, what are you?

Are you more than a man, and have you no share
In the every-day dangers besetting us all?
Will you open your Bible and show me where
Your warrant is found for the judge's chair,
And exemption from the Fall?

Wherein is the likeness to Christ, I pray,
In an act like this, in which you track
A sick fellow-wayfarer's suffering clay,
Till you've hunted him down, and brought him to bay,
Helpless, and on his back?

And talk of his sins to the man you have tracked—
Of whose prior existence you hardly knew;
Do the sinner's misfortunes absolve your act?
Or think you, because my body is racked,
My soul is disabled too?

In health as in sickness my sins I avow,
And pray for their pardon while flesh endures:
They are more, far more, than enough, I trow;
But I shall not add to their number now
By encouraging you in yours.

Oh I wrong you not! I know your place—
You're a worldling doing the work of a saint;
But in me you have wholly mistaken your case:
You must go elsewhere with your holy grimace
And your sepulchre coat of paint.

The Church as a part of the world you know:
It's a business you have at your fingers' ends,—
Its inward machinery outward show,
How the funds are raised, and the side-winds blow,
And the general policy tends.

Its earthly competitors, how they are led—
To interests like these you are more than awake;
In these you have work for your worldly head;
But here, as you sit by a sick man's bed,
You are simply a huge mistake.

I acknowledge your gifts, and your practical mind,—
Your eloquence too in its proper field;
But the still small voice, and the words that bind,
With Christ's own fetters, a man to his kind,
To you is a secret sealed.

Though you speak with the tongue of angels and man,
Work wonders, move mountains, give all to the poor,
There's a grace you want, shrinks them all to a span:
Believe it or not, there's a flaw in your plan—
Foundations are insecure.

But who shall convince my Lord Bishop of sin?
What has he to repent of, or confess?
He's already attained—there is nothing to win:
To the Church he is spotless without and within,
And all men acquiesce.

You are angry? ah, well, as you go through the street,
Though your brow is black, and your lip is curled,
There is plenty to solace you,—words more sweet;
'Twill be Rabbi! and Rabbi! from all you meet,—
You are back to your Church in the world.

SOUL SUSTENANCE.

Seek peace where you can find it. 'Tis not here,
Amid the petty worries that beset
Man's higher will, drowned in the daily fret
Of small anxieties that peep and peer,
And wear men's lives away from year to year.
Our boasted civilisation spreads a net,
'Twere better man should labour to forget
If he would keep his soul's high vision clear.

Look there! outside the rock-bound harbour bar,
And watch the plunging breakers headlong hurled!
White-crested horseman of the bloodless war,
Declared from the foundation of the world!
In Nature's glee the soul forgets her load,—
The fountains of refreshment dwell with God.

Mount Edgcumbe.

TWO SERMONS.

"The church bell, which elsewhere calls people together to worship God, calls them together in Scotland to listen to a *preachment*."—ISAAC TAYLOR.

No. I.

You take too much upon you, friend;
You speak in far too firm a tone
Of *others'* sins, for one who has
A human nature of his own.

I highly prize your moral worth,
Your sterling virtues pure and strong;
But whether these should give you ground
To frown upon the weak and wrong

I question much. Bethink yourself,—
You still are human after all,
And therefore should not quite forget
You too are liable to fall.

You need not preach a Christian creed
With any hope men's souls to win,
If in your heart you do not feel
Some sense of fellowship in sin.

And even although the bulk of men
Were poor and weak where you are strong,
You'd better try to lead them right
Than scold them when you deem them wrong.

You hurt your office and your power
By taking ground so high as this;
The world will not be led by such
Hard self-sufficing righteousness.

You but provoke its criticism,
And feed it with the very food
That keeps it living in the wrong,
Though you may think you're doing good.

The truths you teach may be the best,
And yet the teaching fail in merit;
Christ's truth itself may yet be taught
With something of the devil's spirit.

No. II.

(*Ancien régime ;* but not dead yet.)

His text was one that gave him room
To fume, and fulminate, and make
The house of God a house of gloom,—
A text to make the sinner quake.
Corruption was the theme of it,
And Hell the lurid gleam of it.

Mankind, he preached, were poisoned through ;
Corrupt without, corrupt within,
Black was the universal hue,—
"In short," said he, "the rock of sin
On every side has wrecked you all,
Moral and intellectual."

With Calvinistic pessimism
He found all hopeful creeds unfit,
And plucked, according to his schism,
The sourest plums from Bible writ,
And tried to palm them off on us,
With solemn croak cacophonous.

And as he argued—pulpit-perched—
A gracious God indorsed his views,
I turned my eyes away, and searched
For children's faces in the pews.
I felt I must not look at him
For fear I threw the book at him.

He proved each man from head to foot
A mass of putrefying sore,
Thoughts festering in a heart of soot,
Sin oozing out at every pore.
The body and the soul of us,
The Devil had the whole of us.

He loved his theme, 'twas clear enough,
For all the rottenness and dirt
And rank defilement of the stuff,—
One felt he had the thing at heart;
He hugged it so, and handled it,
And dressed it up, and dandled it.

Then plunging past the gates of death,
He mixed the sinner's awful cup,
Till hot and red he stopt for breath,
And mopped the perspiration up.
If terror could re-fashion us,
He did not spare the lash on us.

I saw him when the task was done,
His gown and morals packed away,
His deep self-satisfaction won,
His reeking supper on the tray;
And looking through the smoke of it,
'Twas then I saw the joke of it.

The pious wrath, the wordy run,
From every mouth too glibly poured,
Which makes us feel that we have done
Some special service for the Lord,—
Oh the deceiving seed of it!
The tongue without the deed of it!

LONDON.

"Gentlemen, you may make light of this danger now; but the danger of centralisation is one of the greatest dangers we have to fear in this country."—LORD ROSEBERY.

LONDON, thou mightiest mass alive!
Great human forge! the busiest hive
Of work beneath the sun done,
What power beneath thy daily load,
Short of the very arm of God,
Could keep thee moving, London?

Men try to compass thee with speech,
To prove with figures past their reach
What's never been by man done.
Statistics only more involve
The miracle no man can solve,
The throbbing world of London!

From east and west, from north and south,
The earth is taxed to fill thy mouth,
With work in every zone done.
The myriad sails beside thee furled
Have scoured the seas of all the world
To fill thy maw, O London!

What endless labour here finds room,
From work within the garret's gloom
To work upon the throne done.
Pauper and prince, and priest and cheat,
Jostling each other in the street,
All find their work in London.

A motley world, of every race,
Of every feature, form, and face,
Black, white, and swarthy sun-dun.
All sorts, conditions, ranks, degrees,
Turks, Negroes, Tartars, Japanese,
They're all at home in London!

The bishop rolls along the street,
Lazarus is lying at his feet—
Salvation for each one done,
Though still the nation's boasted creed,
'Tis cherished more in word than deed
In many parts of London.

What woe beneath the buzz and hum!
For here all wretched creatures come
That faith and hope abandon.
Misfortune's offspring, huddled, hurled,
The broken wreckage of the world,
Seeks harbour here in London!

And every nation pours its throng,
Its cast-off crowd of sin and wrong,
With hundreds that have none done.
For many a kind heart shares the flight
Of shame that shudders at the light,
And hides its head in London.

And gentle folks, once well-to-do,
Who never dreamt, and never knew,
That revenue could run done,—
Brought up to everything but work,
Half-housed! half-starved! half-mad! they lurk
By thousands here in London.

Ah! well for you, who only know
The sunny street, the outward show,
The favour and the fun done.
If you could see the hidden tears,
And hear the sighs God only hears,
Your hearts would sink in London.

To every city under heaven,
To every living thing is given
Allotted time to run done.
Then, earth to earth must pass away,
As Babylon did, and Nineveh,—
What of the night, O London?

Think, London, of that day ahead!
Thy noise for ever stricken dead,
And all thy labour undone;
When foul birds flit from tomb to tomb
For garbage in the ghastly gloom—
The swamp, that once was London!

HONOURS.

TO H. A. B.

He was thrown from his horse just a fortnight ago,
Fractured his skull, and was killed on the spot;
And already, before the grass can grow
On his new-made grave, he is quite forgot.

So busy a man, too, in life's affray,
With his time filled up to the hour and the minute;
There was hardly a thing in a public way
But in some form or other his finger was in it.

As borough town councillor taking the lead,
If a bailie were wanted he stopped the gap:
Now a new-made magistrate reigns in his stead,
And his relict "receives" in her widow's cap.

Out of common respect for his councillorhood,
They might surely have waited a month, good Lord!
Ere his vacant appointments were all made good,
And his place was filled at the council board.

Is there never a world where the "unpaid" soul,
Who gives labour for nothing, and that without stint,
Receives something more for his place on life's *rôle*
Than the blessing of seeing his name in print?

L'Envoy.

You, friend, at your easel, and I at my rhyme,
We must shun that pitfall at any cost;
Popularity's bait is the devil's birdlime,
Where the object is gained and the man is lost.
I had rather your canvas were finally furled,
My verse in the fire there crumpled and curled,
Than that either should trim to the tune of the world.

CREEDS.

"They have cast fire into Thy sanctuary."

The truths that everybody sees,
Dear friend, let's rather think on these
Than dwell upon the differences.

Why should religion run to seed
Upon the borders of a creed
On which no two men are agreed,

When there's so much of common land
Where honest men can take a stand,
And shake each other by the hand,—

A blessed land of pastures green
And quiet waters, where unseen
The soul can rest herself between

The struggles of life's battle-storm,
And hide her from the earthly worm
Of her distresses multiform ;—

A land—earth's heritage—that lies
In all men's hearts, in all men's eyes,
An ever-smiling paradise ?

Why labour so to ferret out
Those arguments that writhe about,
And nourish only strife and doubt ?

Let's rather with a wise decision
Stamp out the points that breed division,
And bring God's truth into derision.

They live but in the truth's disguise ;
They have no savour of the skies,
And feed no soul-necessities.

The points on which we disagree
Are but the fruits of that old tree
That poisoned our humanity,—

Diseases of an earthly state;
If we can only trust and wait,
We'll lay them down at heaven's gate.

Why then insist upon them here,
Till all that honest men hold dear
Becomes the butt of sceptic sneer?

We are not blameless: who can tell
How much this sin of ours may swell
The numbers of the infidel?

A sin not less the full of shame
That it affects a holy flame,
And preaches in Religion's name.

Alas! alas! the early day
Ere truth waxed wise enough to stray
From her divine simplicity;

When men could say to one another,
Where Christians first were wont to gather:
"Behold them! how they love each other."

If the reverse, men now should take
For truth, although his heart should break,
What answer could the Christian make ?

'Mid all this broken unity,
This Devil's opportunity
Of modern mock community,

This creed idolatry, this thrall
That nourishes an endless brawl,
And lives on true Religion's fall,—

Let's strike it out, it cannot be :
But there is somewhere, could we see,
A broader base of unity,—

Some simpler test of good and true ;
No subtlety that looks askew,
And changes with the point of view,—

A creed that does not strive or cry,
Nor vaunt its own sufficiency
By giving all dissent the lie ;

That breeds no spirit rank and rife
Full fed upon those seeds of strife,
That poison all its highest life ;

That urges not the greatest good
Of greatest numbers, as it should;
But teaches rather to exclude,

And lays upon the soul a load
Unbearable: a human code
That half obscures the truth of God,

With systems crossed and counter-crossed,
Where philosophic labours lost
Feed only reason's fools at most.

But more, if it were understood,
The question is not "If we should?"
We could not do it if we would;—

We could not shape a standard creed
To serve all time and every need,
And be to all the truth indeed.

For truth confined to mortal pages,
Conforming still to different gauges,
Is different truth in different ages.

Judge by ourselves, dear friend, and say,
Are the beliefs of life's young May
The same with those we hold to-day?

Not so, alas! they faint and fade,
Or live in memory to upbraid
For all the foolish vows we made.

Yet think not, friend, your creeds among,
That those fond faiths when we were young
Are worthless things because unsung

To psalms on Sundays, or because
Your full-grown code of bloodless laws
Has gained a longer-faced applause.

Take care, in your creed-righteousness,
Your head's best wisdom has not less
Of God than your heart's foolishness.

They were not lost, those early years,
Ere faith had drawn on wisdom's fears,—
I see them yet through half-shed tears.

But mark, I do not justify
Those fervent faiths of youth—not I;
It is but right that they should die.

But, then, should he whose creed is made
Of colours that can change and fade
To something different each decade—

Should he who cannot make a rule
To guide himself be yet the fool
Who hopes to put the world to school?

No, no, dear friend; let others seek
A short-lived fame amongst the weak
Who live to hear each other speak

In measured phrases smooth and bland,
That prove conclusions out of hand
On points fools only understand.

But we—if we must build a creed—
Let's base our faith on what we need,
And not on niceties that feed

The spirit's lust with earthly meat
Of doctrines clipt all trim and neat,
In which to glass our own conceit,

And give to some particular view
Applause so racked beyond its due,
Its very truth is hardly true.

We need not look so far abroad
For ground select and seldom trod
To caper in the sight of God.

All that the wisest man can teach,
Though he were gifted with the speech
Of angels, lies not out of reach

Of him who seeks the better part
In the clear light and simple art
God gives unto an upright heart.

"CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN."

Oft have I seen, in midmost heart of June,
Day breaking in a rough and rugged morning,
Black thunder-clouds, that gave the world a warning
Of lightnings that would leap upon it soon.
And then, anon, the winds fell down at noon,
The clouds dispersed, the sun, all danger scorning,
Sank in the peaceful west, the hills adorning,
And through a breathless twilight rose the moon!

Not in the storm, O Lord! or fire, or thunder,
Dost Thou bring home to man his final choice.
These are but screens of the eternal wonder
That stand between us and Thy holier voice.
When Thy strong Sun has drawn these veils asunder,
Men hold their souls in patience, and rejoice.

Bay of Napoule.

WORK.

I.

"In the sweat of thy face," &c.

Blest work! if ever thou wert curse of God,
What must His blessing be? Drier of tears,
Man's surest comforter when his abode
Is clothed about with sorrow and soul-fears,
When clouds and darkness gather on the road
Till all his land of promise disappears,
And he sees nothing in the coming years
But aimless wandering with a heavy load.
He will not hear thy wiser counsellings
Till all earth's counsel fails: then thou art known,—
An angel, then, with healing on thy wings,
Bringing from heaven a peace that is thine own.
Before thy lesser cross his fears are dumb,—
He sings and works whatever fate may come.

WORK.

II.

"If any man will *do* . . . he shall *know*."—JOHN vii. 17.

THOU school of life, and only education
Worth the having. All that is elsewhere taught
Is but the *dilettante* fringe of thought:
Thou art the centre of its inspiration.
Wherever thou with holiness art sought,
Men find in thee an onward revelation
Clearing the way. Before thy busy hands
Error—and error's friend, confusion—flies.
And slowly lifting melancholy eyes,
Through half shed tears, arrested Sorrow stands
And smiles in thy sweet face: oh, who can tell
The deep unspoken worship thou hast brought;
Praise, prayer, and duty sweetly interwrought:
The idler is the only infidel!

TIME AND ETERNITY.

What matters it to us, who are immortal,
Which side o' the grave we stand on, when we know
That what the world calls death is but the portal
Leading to life again? 'Tis but to go
Across a gurgling river in the dark,
Hanging on God; and but a moment so,
Till we are over, where we disembark
And enter life afresh. 'Tis basely wrong
We should so meanly understrike the mark
As measure life by years; and all along
Busy ourselves, arranging little schemes
That death will dash to pieces, when we might
Be building, far above these earthly dreams,
Houses that stand for ever in God's light.

A POPULAR CHARACTER.

A CLEVER fellow, wide awake,
The world allows that he can take
Measure of most things—no mistake!

Don't humbug him with moral prose;
Without the "*wherewithal*" it goes
For next to nothing. Oh, he knows!

He knows the world and all its ways;
Your "*theory*" deserves all praise—
"A pity that it never pays!"

Oh yes, he knows, sees through and through it,
Admits you're right—the way you view it,
He would advise you to pursue it.

But he, you see, must gain his end,
Although, in gaining, he offend
Or even sacrifice a friend.

There is not any one condition
He will not swallow for position,
And gratify a weak ambition.

No ditch too dirty or too deep;
No means too humble, road too steep:
For where he cannot walk he'll creep.

Most courteous, too; where'er he can,
Becomes all things to every man—
If it will only help his plan.

Most affable, but all a trick;
Where he has power he'll bite and kick,—
Where he has not he'll cringe and lick.

And yet this wretched creeping creature
Measures universal nature
By the height of his own stature,

And thinks, because he waits the tide
For filthy scraps, all men beside
Are similarly occupied.

With those who not for golden shower
Will stoop to dodge and serve the hour,—
He puts it down to want of power;

And yet, a man of means and place—
A moral man, a man of grace—
One reads it in the world's face!

Oh, friend, you are a great success—
A man whom fortune seems to bless;
But just allow me to confess,

If you could have a verdict found
That all the world believed you sound:
Look! there's the door—get out, you hound!

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

It was in the dreary winter, when the year is grey and old,
That I sat beside my sorrow, in the darkness, lone and cold,—
With my soul alone and cold.

The cruel grief that pierced me through, oh, ask me not to tell,
But let me hold it in my heart, hiding it where it fell,—
Unspoken where it fell.

Down relentless nights of darkness, from the golden
heights of youth,
Black sorrow hunted me, with silent foot and steady
mouth,—
Slow foot and steady mouth.

And gazing down the darkness of my life with madden-
ing pain,
I saw strange idiot fingers clutching upwards at my brain,—
Crawling upwards at my brain.

And I heard the whispered word come up the dreary
realms of sadness,
The unintelligible sound that hinted coming madness,—
The awful hint of coming madness.

I smote the heavens with a cry, the last cry of my woe;
Black, utter silence only frowned into the dark below,—
Dark above and dark below.

So at last I lay me down, and, whispering to my sorrow,
said—
"We shall seek the blessèd peace that dwells beside the
quiet dead,—
Seek oblivion with the dead."

While I spoke a light broke o'er me, with my soul's deliverance,—
When the worst comes God comes with it; and I fell into a trance,—
A strangely conscious trance.

I bethought me that some cataleptic seizure it must prove,
For though I felt, and saw, and heard, I could not speak nor move,—
Not a finger could I move.

There I lay without heart motion and without a conscious breath,
As if struck to instant marble in the rigid grip of death,—
In the stony grip of death.

Trance or death? It kept my eyes so firmly fixed within my head
That when they came they started back, exclaiming "She is dead!"—
In terror, "She is dead!"

I heard them walk about the room, with hushed and noiseless tread,
And a solemn voice, with studied gloom, saying, "The spark is fled,"—
"The vital spark is fled."

Then they stretched me out so softly, when they knew
that I was dead;
They did not dream that all the while I heard each word
they said,—
Every heartless word they said.

They discussed the many changes death would bring
about the place,
And then the gossip turned upon the jewels and the lace,—
The money, and the jewels, and the lace.

Some praised my generous dealings, ready help with
hand or head,
In the usual easy way such debts are settled with the
dead,—
With the creditor that's dead.

Uttering words of seeming kindness, but they lied when
I was dead;
I knew the tear was false as Hell that dropped upon
my head,—
Dropped on my fallen head.

Then they spoke of what I speak not, words that seemed
to taint the air,
To good or bad when death arrives the foulest birds are
there,—
The carrion birds are there.

Then back to fulsome praise, and again before death's face
They could not help returning to the money and the lace,—
To the jewels, and the money, and the lace.

Their falseness wearied me; I wished that they would veil my head,
That I might lie and smile unseen, ay, smile at what they said,—
Lie and smile at what they said.

But surely they were cowards thus to praise me lying dead:
They knew I could not answer them one word for what they said,—
Not one word for what they said.

They dared not praise me had I lived, in such a fulsome mood,
They dared not then have praised me, lest I cursed them where they stood,—
Yes, cursed them where they stood.

But now all passion passes; praise or blame, heart's grief or mirth,
No more can reach me where I lie, at peace with all the earth,—
At deep peace with all the earth.

Three days and nights I lay alone, for the living kept aloof;
I heard the winds moan in the night and the rain upon the roof,—
The pattering rain upon the roof.

I heard the old clock in the stair, ticking within the wall,
And I thought it ticked out in the dark that "God was over all,—
God-God, God-God, God was over all."

Only once a childish footstep ventured near me where I lay,
Before the household was astir, about the break of day,—
Near the dawning of the day.

The child had doubtless been denied the chamber of the dead,
Yet here God's fearless creature lay beside me, head by head,—
Close together, head to head.

She put her hand upon my face, then wondering if she durst,
She kissed me, kissed me, kissed me, till I thought my heart would burst,—
O, God! I thought my heart would burst.

And when she left I heard my name 'twixt her sobbing and her sighs,
Till blessed tears came back to me, and fell from out my eyes,—
Fell out of my dead eyes.

At last they carried me away, with solemn pomp and slow,
And all the way I heard them speak in strains of forcèd woe,—
Words of hollow-sounding woe.

They did not hear the laugh of scorn, nor yet the ghostly tread
Of the indignant spirit walking with them at my head,—
Close beside them at my head.

Of all the crowd were only two whose words held not the stain;
These two with callous honesty discussed the price of grain,—
The markets and the current price of grain.

But all the rest they thought it seemly so to praise the dead;
Oh, this world! it soundeth doubly hollow when the life hath fled,—
Strangely hollow unto one that lieth dead.

Then they cut a holy text upon the tombstone at my
head;
They could not even let alone the quiet harmless dead,—
They must blaspheme the dead.

Oh! I felt a speechless peace come down like balm
upon my brain,
When at last they turned away and left me lying in the
rain,—
In the soft and silent rain.

And it fell so gently whispering, like a smile upon a
frown,
That I wondered if it knew a brutal hoof had struck
me down,—
That a brutal human hoof had struck me
down.

But my soul is now at peace, thanking God that all is
past,
That through the maddening surges I have reached the
shore at last,—
The silent shore at last.

REST.

Passed into peace; you shall not vex her now,
Beyond the reach of all your idle breath;
Her aching heart is stilled, her troubled brow
Is smoothed beneath the silent hand of death.

Passed into peace; all that she had she gave you,
Poured her life's treasure through an open sluice,
Did all she could, and all she knew to save you,
And in return reaped nothing but abuse.

Passed into peace; her freedom now begins,—
Life's slavery is over. There she lies,
The woman, made the scapegoat of your sins:
If you should shout to her she will not rise.

Passed into peace; out of the friendless city,
Where you had left her, homeless and alone,
To fight her way without one word of pity,
Flesh of your very flesh! bone of your bone!

Passed into peace! she thought the hand of death
Was some old friend's she once had held before.
"Ah, come at last!" she said, then, one long breath,
The broken heart, long-suffering, beat no more.

GIFTS.

Beware of gifts from men;
Examine them, and look them well i' the mouth,
The caution of the proverb notwithstanding,
Though clothed in words as balmy as the south,
In accents of a heart with love expanding,—
Beware of gifts from men.

Say, would they give thee praise?
Take care of it; there's poison in that cup,—
Sweet at the first, it slowly closes up
The source of that approval in the heart
Which comes from God. Choose thou the holier part,
And leave earth's meaner ways.

Have friendship, if you must,
But you must pay for it, and give, and give, and give;
There, where the carcass lies, the eagles live;
Where it is gone, past favours are forgot,
Till friend shall pass old friend and know him not,—
There is but One to trust.

Is it some higher shelf
Of honour men would give you? Who are they
That give it? Are they made of different clay,
That you must stoop and take what they allot?
A higher honour no man ever got
Than that he gave himself.

What would they give you? Bread?
Touch not a bite. The crust that you have earned
Is holier food than this. The wise have learned
That bread unwrought for does but little good,—
Possesses not the virtue of that food
By work inherited.

"Who then can help? And what?
When you yourself are stricken in your place?"
Ah then! my Friend will come and kiss my face,
And take my hand in his (I know him well),
And lead me through the fields of asphodel,
His gift! Thank God for that.

MONEY'S WORTH.

RELIGION, did you say? The man has none:
'Tis but religion's husk—a mere convention.
He goes to church, and there the matter's done,—
Religion is no part of his intention.
He looks upon it as a priest's invention—
A mere ecclesiastical spring-gun—
To frighten silly folks to condescension.
He joins the Church because he hates contention:
And, just to make his soul as safe as any,
Takes out a policy against hell-fire:
A shrewd investment, costing not a penny
Either in shape of premium or duty.
To him religion stands for nothing higher:
The cheapness of the bargain is the beauty.

THE MAN WITHOUT AN ENEMY.

A LITTLE shabby shuffling devil,
Half a coward, half a drivel,
To whom one hardly can be civil.

A mind that every trifler leads,
Whose thoughts, however good the seeds,
Can never ripen into deeds.

The first that stops him on the street
Convinces him, until he meet
A second, who will straight defeat

The first; and so he walks among
Men's thoughts, till every change be rung
Within the compass of the tongue.

A mental mush of meek concessions,
And blotting-paper half-impressions,
Sum up the creature's brain possessions.

His life's a sickly consultation,
An endless, aimless alternation,
A lukewarm hell of hesitation.

Ransack the man from top to toe,
His whole anatomy will show
No certainty of Yes or No.

Survey him round and round about,
Look through him, turn him inside out,—
There's nothing there but rags of doubt,

And even these change with the wind,—
Not one that's strong enough to bind
The floating lumber of his mind.

Buckets of watery locution,
Infinitesimal dilution
Of one weak drop of resolution.

His mind can never keep its hold
With strength enough to make him bold
To strike, until the iron's cold.

He stands at gaze upon life's brink,
But dare not enter; can but shrink,
And wonder what the world would think.

Who smote the Dutchman in the Downs,
And chased him home afar?
'Twas the old sea-dogs of England,
The sailor lads of England,
The dauntless tars of England,
That made us what we are.

Then grudge no means to fix more sure
These anchors of our hope,
The men who wield, for rich and poor,
The tiller and the rope.
If British bounds must still contain
A people bold and free,
Our path is plain, we must retain
The sceptre of the sea.

Let not the record be forgot,
Nor drowned in party jar,
'Twas the old sea-dogs of England,
The sailor lads of England,
The dauntless tars of England,
That made us what we are.

PROVE ALL THINGS.

You talk of soul, good sir, but where's the proof?
The proof, I say, you have a soul at all?
Where is its visible action? On what stuff
Do you sustain it? What if I should call
Its life in question? Body I can see,
A mortal case that should contain a soul,
And upon which you lavish all and whole,
Your every thought. But think how you would be
If fleshy life, with all its hungry roll
Of wants, were struck away. No more again
To eat, or drink, or sleep; the remnant then,
Is't not grotesquely inconceivable?
Can you imagine life of these bereft?
Your body gone, pray, what the devil's left?

SNOWDROPS IN A STORM.

Poor broken flower, in this vile tempest whirled,
What prompteth thee to such untimely birth,
To be so soon down-trodden in the earth?
Before thy pearly petals had uncurled
The bells that ring in springtime to the world,
Thou wouldst have brought us welcome, and with mirth
Led all our thoughts away from winter's dearth,
Had fate but left thy beauty unimperilled.

In this sad world thine is a common fate,
A world in which the gentlest heart fares worst,
Borne down by the intolerable weight
Of kindness unregarded, or accurst,
Its labour spurned; its love disconsolate
As thine, fair flower! the purest suffer first.

IN MEMORIAM.

Wild winter morn, whose dawning brings
The whisper, "Henry Renton's dead,"
Oh beat not thou thy sorrowing wings
Because a gentle soul has fled.

Though earth should groan from pole to pole
In travail like a thing distressed,
Far out beyond the storm his soul
Hath entered on his quiet rest.

A rest well honoured, nobly won,
And yet, what loss to living men—
In all their work beneath the sun
Thy hand shall never help again.

A death like thine hath called a truce,
Heard round about thee many a mile,
And men forget their daily use
To stand beside thy grave awhile

To pay that honour due to one
Who bore the battle brunt of life,
And ranked a second unto none
Where conscience called him to the strife;

Who freedom's flag hath never bowed,
But single-handed dared to stand
Unmoved before the bellowing crowd
In Caffre or in Christian land.

Though strong within thy special sphere,
No straitened cultus bound thee down,
Or stained thy courage with a fear
Of coward's caution, church's frown.

Thy latest deed—when time was brief—
Proclaimed aloud thy higher call
To preach a union of belief,
Through wider charity, to all.

Great to the end, when life's last ray
Gave notice of impending doom,
Thy dying effort was to lay
Thy laurel on a brother's tomb:

A brother fallen on the field,—[1]
That valiant soldier, strong and true,
Who hid behind his dazzling shield
A heart his comrades only knew;

Who strove to reach the higher law,
The central light of all the creeds,
And struck straight out at all he saw
That robbed true freedom of her needs.

Farewell, kind heart! thy battle's o'er,
Thy spirit gone to Him who gave;
'Mongst honours paid thee many more,
We lay a song upon thy grave.

A LITTLE GIRL IN A GARDEN.

THERE! there she bounds! a footstep light as wind,
Unstained of earth, a daughter of the skies,
Her floating hair with summer flowers entwined,
The blue of summer's heaven in her eyes.

[1] The late Alexander Russel, of the *Scotsman*.

Around her every movement summer girds
A sense of sunshine as she leaps along ;
The sweet-brier hedge is full of singing birds,
But not more full than is her heart of song.

'Twixt summer and her soul there seems to run
A power to feel together, and confer,
Binding their lives more closely into one
By language known but to the flowers and her.

The blackbird more than sings to her—it speaks ;
The plane-tree whispers to her all it knows ;
The secret of the rose is on her cheeks,
And on her brow the lilies shed their snows.

Oh mystery of mysteries ! Can it be
That this fair soul must take the common way ?
Learn what the world learns, taste life's bitter tree,
And reach the gates of death by slow decay ?

Oh Thou that took the children in Thine arms,
And blessing them drew all men by the deed,
Guide Thou her every step through life's alarms,
And help her in her bitter hour of need.

Let some of the sweet summer of her days
Remain with her to gladden life's last hour,
Till passing with the sunset's dying rays
She falls asleep in Thee, a sleeping flower.

VITA UMBRATILIS.

As men grown winter-weary close their eyes
To give imagination stronger wing,
Wherewith to paint a visionary spring,
Invoking memory till pictures rise
Of grass grown greener, flowers, and balmy skies—
Beside the brook they hear the lintwhite sing,
And in the stillness, wild bees murmuring,
Till winter days are lost in spring's disguise.

So in the widowed winter of his days
The solitary mourner shuts his door,
Where, brooding on the visionary store,
Lost forms and faces pass beneath the rays
Of light and love that cheered the gladsome ways
Of what was once his summer ; his no more.

EUPHROSYNE.

Because the gods have so apparell'd thee,
Spirit of loveliness and light!
Sweet-lipped, blue-eyed, and golden-curled thee
In sudden beauty, dazzling mortal sight;
Tell me, fine spirit—Is it right
That thou, all heedless of another's pain,
Shouldst bound through life, a crystal river,
Leaping onwards to the main—
Leaping, laughing ever;
Fast binding with a golden-linkèd thrall
The charmèd hearts and eyes of all?
I charge thee, answer me, fine sprite:
Say—Is it right?

Letting thy level glances fall
With sudden strength electrical;
Launching thy wingèd smile with arrowy power
Through finest thrills of glittering laughter-shower,
A slanting sunbeam through the summer rain,
Piercing the blood and brain;
I charge thee stand and answer, thing of light:
Say—Is it right?

Dost thou not know
That oftentimes unconscious laughter flings
Her silver fingers o'er the hidden strings,
Or waketh with the rustle of her wings
A silent sleeping woe?

Hast thou not heard
That noblest souls, beyond a thought of guile,
Pierced by the golden-shafted smile
That heedless beauty gave,

Have maddened from the bridle of control
Through dark disaster, with the burning coal
Of a devouring sorrow in their soul
Chasing them to the grave?

Laugh! laugh again, sweet spirit, laugh:
I would not have thee sorrowful. But, oh!
Remember thou that in this world below,
Hid in the cup of life that thou must quaff,
Are bitter drops of woe,—
That, when the dark day cometh, thou
With trusting heart and quiet uplift brow,
Dauntless and pure as now,
Must take thy sister Sorrow by the hand;
And she will teach thee, in her holy fears,
Earth's dearest joys, like heavenly rainbows, stand
Upon a bridge of tears.

COMPENSATION.

I.

They took him from his fellows—marked him out
For kingdom; on a nation's worship set
His glittering throne, and crowned him with a shout.
But yet, alas! but yet,

God was not mocked. The world could not disarm
The silent enemy within the breast,
That undermining of the unseen worm,—
The worm that will not rest.

II.

They cast him out in anger; called him mad,
Scorned him, and made his tender heart a whet
To sharpen idle wit. Oh it was sad.
But yet, thank heaven! but yet,

He was not friendless, for where'er he trod,
Warm words fell round him in sweet summer showers,
Down from the starry silences of God,
Up from the lips of flowers.

THE GLOWWORM.

By night a diamond in the grass,
  Its very light obscures its form;
When day's effulgence comes, alas!
  What is it but a worm?

And what art thou on wings of light
  Threading with fire the darkness lonely?
A dazzling mystery by night!—
  By day an insect only!

And thou, fair moon, that rul'st on high,
  When night's black curtains all are drawn,
What seemest thou in sunlit sky?
  An empty spectre, wan!

'Tis thus the poet's thought is known
  By all who feel the mystic thrall,—
Read me by light that is mine own,
  Or read me not at all.

WHERE TWEED FLOWS DOWN.

WHERE Tweed flows down by Cadonlee,
And slowly seeks a deepening bed,
I stand alone, a blighted tree.

From me no more, as all men see,
Shall bud go forth, or leaf be shed,
Where Tweed flows down by Cadonlee.

Since that wild night of storm, when she
From all her happy kindred fled,
I stand alone, a blighted tree.

Deep in the night she came to me,
Hands clenched above her fallen head,
Where Tweed flows down by Cadonlee.

And holding still the fatal key
Of that grim secret, dark and dread,
I stand alone, a blighted tree.

Before the black pool held its dead,
I heard the last wild word she said!—
I stand alone, a blighted tree,
Where Tweed flows down by Cadonlee.

CARLYLE.

AFTER READING HIS POSTHUMOUS REMINISCENCES.

Is this the ripened utterance of the Sage?
The voice made holier, coming from the sod,
Of him we almost deemed a demigod.
The Poet and the Prophet of his age,
Could this great soul find room upon his page
For all the petty venom of the road?
Uphoarding the unholy heritage
Till he himself was safe in death's abode?

Oh! let us prove these shafts that pierce and sting
From some crazed loophole of his brain were shot,
Blind arrows from the irresponsible string
Of some wild marksman, mad, and knew it not.
Let death condone the errors of a king—
Lay them beside his bones, and let them be forgot.

AT DARWIN'S GRAVE.

(WESTMINSTER ABBEY, 26TH APRIL 1882.)

Not many years ago, the popular shout
Was "Atheist!" and critics, well at ease,
With such a godly-seeming world to please,
Still found in all he wrote the dreaded "Doubt."
A day, when every little pulpit spout
Spat venom at our English Socrates:
He heard them as one hears the wind i' the trees,
And turned to work his Revelation out.

And now, the self-same world, true to its laws,
Brings to his grave its tinsel and its strife,
To blur a blameless name with rank applause,
And make his death less lovely than his life:
He should have sanctified earth's common sod,
This quiet working worshipper of God.

TO ANDREW LANG.

(ON THE OCCASION OF HIS ENROLMENT AS A FREEMAN OF THE BURGH OF SELKIRK.)

Deem not our roll of honour aught the less
Because no learned laurel it doth bear:
Prince's and politician's names are there,
But these, beside the poet's power to bless,
Are names we hardly know that we possess.
'Tis not with these that we would have you share
The honour Scott was not too proud to wear,
In all his greatness, sweetness, nobleness!

'Tis as a poet, then, we claim thee here,
And bid thee welcome with thy sheaves returning,
Gathered from many a field, both far and near.
On plains of Troy, or Border hills sojourning,
Wherever led, may thee the Muses cheer,
And keep within thy heart the home lamp burning.

BROKEN CISTERNS.

If thou art honest, do not seek repose
Upon the world's approval. Do not stir
To gain her smile. She only flatters those
Who stoop to flatter her.

The wanton mistress of a godless race,
Whose love is lies, whose heart is dead and cold,
Whose slippery favour and whose foul embrace
Is daily bought and sold.

If thou art honest, heed not thou her blame,
But let her grind her teeth, and foam, and shriek;
Her power to bless or curse an honest name
On either side is weak.

Yet strong enough to be a deadly snare
To him who fears her hate, loves her applause,
And waits upon her judgments: oh beware,
And trust not thou her laws.

If thou art honest, then thou hast a law
That is thine own; listen to that alone.
Hold thou the world's opinion at a straw,
And scathelessly pass on.

TO THE REV. ROBERT BORLAND,

MINISTER OF YARROW,

Author of 'Yarrow: Its Poets and Poetry.'

YARROW! dear Scotland's Helicon,
There's music in the name of it.
Was ever stream more widely known?
Had ever stream the fame of it?

A treasure-house of old romance,
The glamour and the gleam of it,
Is Yarrow's by inheritance,
In every pool and stream of it,

Till "Yarrow" has become a word
That, in the simple ring of it,
Awakens in the heart a cord
That throbs through every string of it.

Whence is this hidden power derived?
What secret feeds the flame of it?
That all the Muses have connived
To guard the sacred claim of it.

Those grand old "makers," would their names
Were written in the roll of it!
Though lost to earth, their deathless claims
Still live within the soul of it.

And yet, not sung by these alone,
Beneath the potent spell of it,
Each poet seems to find his own,
With something new to tell of it.

Our much loved Scott, great Wordsworth's lyre,
The Ettrick Shepherd's lays of it,—
Could river find a sweeter choir
To sing the bonny braes of it?

Dear Borland, may your Yarrow lays
Bring peace, without alloy in it:
Yours is a dearer thing than praise,—
Love's labour, and the joy of it.

RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It is an easy thing to side with those,
In politics, religion, anything,
Whose inconsiderate opinion throws
Their faith to fierce extreme. Or quarrelling
With such unreasoning madness, rashly bring
Your forces to an argument that grows
To equal discord on the opposite string:
But to remain self-centred, and to cling
To one's own conscience, and uphold the right
'Gainst friends and foes alike; to take a stand
And be suspected upon every hand,
Unloved, forsaken; yet in hell's despite
To strike for truth. Though heaven should pass away,
This is the man of God, the world's true stay.

PARTING WORDS.

In that last bed beneath the sky,
Where earth's outworn and wearied quest
Finds peace at length and quiet rest;
If you should come to where I lie,
Remembering that you gave increase
To loneliness and misery,
Waste not on me a single sigh,—
I have forgiven you, go in peace.

But yet, forget not those glad years,
Before the cheerless shadow fell,
Which brought with it our sad "Farewell,"
And taught my feet the way of tears.
God grant it yet may be our lot
To live again our happier past
In that new country, far and vast,
Where heaven may heal what earth could not.

Marah

"That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

MARAH.

When Miriam's timbrels struck the chords of faith,
And all the joyous world was glad with her,
I gathered up my grief without demur.
I would not be the heart that hindereth
The happy world by one unhappy breath,
So took my way into that land of Shur,
Where every well that man may touch or stir
Is bitter with the bitterness of death.

Footsore by day—in dreams by night—I trod
That dewless desert. In its treacherous calms
Death shadows fell upon me, deep and broad,
Till, struggling on, I reached the golden palms
Of Elim. Singing there, some men of God
Bound up my bleeding feet and gave me alms.

SECOND-SIGHT.

THERE cometh a time in the life of man
When earth's realities strike him less,
When the facts of the senses seem nothing, and when
The matters that move him beyond his ken
Are the only things that impress.

Some sorrow perhaps has searched him through,
And burned away in its cleansing fires
Life's baser belongings, and kindled anew
Those higher life-lights that strike out of view
The earth and its low desires.

When life but lives for its holier sake,
The lamp in a temple where no voice sings
But in prayer and praise; those wings that make
That wafting about us, which keeps us awake
To the sense of invisible things.

A time when a man in the world's keen eyes
  Seems fallen behind on the busy road,—
Seems making a senseless sacrifice;
And yet he knows that his heart is wise
  In the sight of the searching God.

The world's weak wisdom has taken flight;
  Things earthly near him, and heavenly far,
Are suddenly seen in an equal light,
And divested of argument, dumb in his sight,
  Stand out for what they are.

Slink out of his way, ye vendors of lies;
  By a light not yours he can read you through,
Oh hollow of heart! and oh worldly wise!
The things you would carefully screen from his eyes
  Are the things that are thrust on his view.

And to you, O soul, where the vision is shown,
  It may come but once in your earthly strife;
Mark well what it says to you, make it your own,
Beat it out into prayer, ere the angel has flown,
  And gird it about your life.

FORSAKEN.

We built our nest in the sun,
Where the sweet west winds were blowing,
We counted our nestlings every one,—
What wonder glad tears would sometimes run?
We could not help their flowing.

We dreamt no sorrow was near,
And in all the glad earth's showing
We saw no thing in the world to fear,
For we held our love as the one thing dear
Of all the world's bestowing.

Child, and mother, and wife,—
What care they how the world is going?
We closed our doors on the outward strife,
The closer to cling to the heart's own life,
And set it in fairer showing.

So fair was our path and sweet,
So daily the dearer growing,
We heard not the march of the muffled feet,
Nor thought of the shadow we soon should meet,
Or the death-dart he was throwing.

Alas for the years that lie
Between Love's reaping and sowing!
A tender flower 'neath a smiling sky—
Then clouds and darkness, and it must die,
Though it rend a heart in the going.

Oh God! Is it wrong that we
Should follow our soul's best knowing?
That we should have prayed for light from Thee,
And, choosing the way that was fair to see,
Chose not the path of Thy showing.

Or, Lord, did the edict go forth,
From an infinite mercy flowing,
To order for us a desolate hearth,
And pluck by the roots love's life upon earth,
That in heaven it might be growing?

Oh help us to bear Thy will;
And whatever Thy hand be strowing,
Give us power to endure it, and strength to sit still,
In the rooted assurance it cannot be ill
Since it comes of Thy bestowing.

BROKEN STRINGS.

My harp is turned to mourning,
And all we've sung and said,
The joyous words, sung o'er and o'er,
We may not sing them any more.
My harp is turned to mourning—
For gladness, tears instead,
And all its echoes answer me,
"My Love is dead!"

We sit together sorrowing,
My fingers o'er thee spread,
But all in vain; they will not come—
The old chords now are dead and dumb.
We sit together sorrowing,
And bow the fallen head,—
The only song that we can sing,
"My Love is dead!"

Oh harp! why are we living?
Why should we longer tread
The songless world? but hasten on,
And follow where our hearts have gone.
Oh harp! why are we living
When all our song has fled?
Thy strings are broken, and my heart,—
"My Love is dead!"

"NOTHING IS HERE FOR TEARS."

—Samson Agonistes.

Why should we walk in sorrow day by day,
Because from all our paths thy life hath fled?
That life is more than ours in every way;
Yet knowing this, we speak of thee as "dead,"
And pitying, sigh "Alas!" and shake the head:
Our words but touch the surface, the appearing,—
How strangely must they sound in thy new hearing.

Keep sorrow for ourselves, 'tis not for thee!
"Holier and Happier!" were the words that passed
Thy dying lips, when from thine agony
The loving Lord on whom thy cares were cast
Stretched out His arms and took thee at the last!—
Thy words, when earth was fading into night,
And heaven was breaking on thy new-born sight.

"Holier and Happier!" from the lips of one
Whose soul, half-way to heaven while it spoke,
Heard through the golden gates the Lord's "Well done,"
And smiling in death's face, laid down its yoke;
Not all thy great heart's sorrow, nor the stroke
Of death's dark utter agony, could quell
The deep unshaken faith that all was well.

"Holier and Happier!"—now thy pain is o'er—
Are words that speak of peace, and breathe a balm
Enshrining all thy memory, more and more,
In such unclouded rest of heavenly calm;
They come to us like words from some high psalm
Begun on earth, but ending otherwhere,
Where sorrow follows not, nor any care.

Within thy great new kingdom, oh my Love!
Forget not those that, waiting, stand without;
We are so poor, and thou so far above
The cares of Time and all the earthly rout,
The purest cannot utterly cast out,—
Oh keep thy promise, bear with us and wait,
Thou first that we shall look for at the gate.

THE REST THAT REMAINETH.

I FRET no more,—wherever death shall take thee,
There must be heaven about you where you go;
Nothing can change, nor death itself unmake thee,
And God that made thee good will keep thee so.

Thy heaven was not to seek in some far region
Apart from what on earth thy heart had known,
For even here we named thee with the legion
Of those whom God hath chosen for His own.

No fancied heaven was thine, of unknown fashion,
Cut off from life, but near us every day;
Thy love and truth, and God-like great compassion,
Shed light divine upon our common way.

And simple things men daily set their eyes on
Were vassals in the kingdom of thy love,
To bring within earth's lowliest horizon
Remembrance of the nobler life above.

Some glad, God-chosen place beyond death's danger,
Some holier, happier home, is surely thine:
Where goodness is thou canst not be a stranger,
Whilst there is room in heaven for stars to shine.

No light like thine can die in God's dominion;
And though He summon thee to worlds unknown,
Wherever thou art borne on death's dark pinion,
The resting-place must still be near the Throne.

THE DEATH OF SUMMER.

Summer is dead! Last night the northern blast
Smote into ice within her dewy eyes
The light of life. And as her spirit past,
The breaking morn, struck through with death's surprise,
With passionate tears and burdensome sad sighs,
Called her by name, and raised her fallen head—
But called in vain; too late!—Summer is dead!

Yes, she is dead that was so beautiful;
She that had love for ever in her face,
And mirth that could betray the wisest fool
To laughter,—she that filled so sweet a place
In all our hearts,—has run her earthly race.
All that is left of her on earth lies low,
Waiting her winter winding-sheet of snow.

And now there is such silence in the air,
It seems as if the pulse of all that is
Were stricken suddenly with mute despair,
Knowing that she is dead; and all things miss,
In some blind way, their long accustomed bliss.
Earth's voices, all—the winds, the waterflow,
The song of all her birds—is hushed and low.

Silence upon the hills: and on the mere
Motionless shadows of the silent trees;
If any wind there moves, it moves in fear,—
A sharp short shudder, waking memories
That fall like falling leaves upon a breeze,—
So gently moving, it might be earth's sigh
That so much loveliness should ever die.

So with Thy sorrowing world we plead, O Lord!
Because of joys that come but do not stay;
Our waiting hearts are sick with hope deferred,—
Bright hope that turns to miserable clay,
And gives us nothing but it takes away.
Speed Thy good time, O Lord! when all shall know
The summer that shall come, and shall not go.

PICK-MAW-MOSS, HAINING.

AUTUMN SONG.

WEARILY wails the winter wind,
With the sad dead leaves before it flying,
As it mourns for the summer it leaves behind
In all its beauty dying.

And wearily sighs this heart of mine,
With its life's dead hopes around it falling,
And its brief bright hours of sweet sunshine
Gone past beyond recalling.

But hark! I hear through the moaning hours
A whispered hope of a bright day coming,
When the world again will be clothed with flowers,
Glad bees about them humming.

Be still, my soul, and strong thy hand
Beneath the cross thou moanest under,
For we yet shall stand in the new God-land,
When the world has broken asunder.

THE HAINING.

PLAITED THORNS.

"By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit."—Isa. xxxviii. 16.

I SUFFERED Pain,—such pain as takes the soul,
And wrestles with it, as it were the prey
Of struggling devils, mad beyond control;—
Such pain that in its pauses night and day,
I clung to God in prayer, and a sigh
That He would let me die:

And lo! while yet I cried in my distress
That even in death my soul might be released,
Pain seemed to sicken in its own excess,
For then it stalked away, a thing appeased;
And sainted smiling of a heavenly face
Filled up the empty place.

I suffered Doubt,—those pangs of deep disgrace
Stinging the faithless soul that has allowed
Loose fiends to point their fingers in his face,
Till he forgets God's goodness in a cloud
Of foul suggestions—pride's presumptuous leaven,
That shuts the door of heaven.

Worn out with pain of endless questionings,
I fell asleep, and in a dream-like show
Saw dying faces straining after things
It were no profit any soul should know:
I cried to God; my tempters fled away
Like devils in dismay!

I suffered Loss,—loss inconsolable.
I could not reason it, or think it out,
Or ask God anything,—could only feel
That life had passed away in one wild shout,
And left me dumb for ever, sitting there,
Stroking his yellow hair.

The past was gone: the very chairs seemed new;
Familiar things upon the walls and floor
Looked strange. The western window's well-known view
Had light upon't I never saw before.
And all things spoke to me in one low breath,
That only whispered, "Death."

I sat with heavy heart and idle hands,
Feeding on memory many a weary night,
When lo! across the darkly gleaming lands
Of wondrous death, clad all about with light,
My loss came back, and gave me joy for tears,
Consuming all my fears.

I suffered Hate,—slow hate that bides its time,
Watching occasion with the famished eyes
Of brutes that watch for prey; suckling in slime
Its hideous offspring, black-mouthed calumnies.
Surely, I argued, this is evil seed,
A wrong without remede.

So, looking not for comfort out of this,
Think how I gladly welcomed him who showed
That even here I was not profitless,—
Man's wrath but wrought in me the will of God:
Yea, that the smiling heavens could find a use
Were hell itself let loose!

I suffer Death,—where all earth's suffering ends.
But now I fear not, for I know heaven's way.
Behind black sorrow's night God's angel stands,
Waiting the dawn of an eternal day.
Since these dark doors but open into light,
Come closer, Death, and smite.

THE DOUBTING HEART.

I.

Oh weary life, so dark, so difficult,
Were ever thy fair promises made good?
Why scatterest thou, and with a breath so rude,
The hopes that bade our youthful hearts exult?
Oh Power Supreme, that work'st in ways occult,
Why bring to dust the fruit that was our food,
Making a desert where such sweet things stood?—
Why tempt us on to life's so poor result,
Through this all-sickening gulf that lies between
The will to do, and the accomplished deed?
Down, doubting heart, whate'er thy cross has been;
Have faith, if nothing else should form thy creed.
What are thy deeds to whom thy heart is seen?
Trust Him who leads thee, and He still will lead.

II.

Faith, wider faith, alone will give thee peace;
Only believe it is His way with thee,
And in that light constrain thy soul to see
Life's crosses. Then, but not till then, shall cease
Their power to make the burden of life's lease
A weight of weary years. Still it is He
Even when thou canst not read the dark decree,
For blinding tears that evermore increase.
The greater sorrow shall more greatly win;
'Tis not for nothing that the soul is driven
Through God-appointed fires of doubt or sin;
The best-loved souls may be the most forgiven,
With Him who guardeth well the life within,
And breaks the heart on earth, to make it His in heaven.

FOOTSORE.

"We look for another country."

O HEAVENLY refuge of my soul,
Jerusalem! I come to thee,
A fainting wanderer at thy gates,
A weary soul that would be free.

On every side cast down, oppressed,
A breaking heart within my breast,
Would God that I could reach thy rest,
Jerusalem ! Jerusalem !

O thou the spirit's only home,
Jerusalem ! to thee I cry ;
The thought of thee alone can give
The power to live, the strength to die.
Through earthly snare, past sorrow's night,
Till faith be merged in perfect sight,
O lead me by thy higher light,
Jerusalem ! Jerusalem !

O holy mother of us all,
Jerusalem ! that I were there,—
That I could lay my burden down,
And reach at last thy blessèd air ;
Where weary feet no more shall stray,
And grief and pain shall melt away
In splendour of thy perfect day,
Jerusalem ! Jerusalem !

O city of the Christ of God,
Jerusalem ! to thee I come :
In thee alone the rest is found
Where death is dead, and sorrow dumb ;

Where God Himself shall wipe away
All tears, and change our bitter lay
To singing in thy courts for aye,
Jerusalem! Jerusalem!

O gladdening vision of my soul,
Jerusalem! Within the skies
Thy streets of gold, thy gates of pearl,
Are evermore before mine eyes.
Where'er I go, in church or street,
The light above thy mercy's seat,
The deathless song about thy feet,
Jerusalem! Jerusalem!

THE SOUL'S ATLANTIS.

I.

EARTH-WEARY and earth-worn,
I laid me down with prayer for heaven's safe keeping,
And tossed upon my bed, till in the morn
God's answer came with sleeping.

I dreamt earth's fight was done,
The evil vanquished, and the battle over,
And I lay resting 'neath a summer sun,
Half hid in waving clover.

Deep in the heart of things,
And outward to the spirit's infinite longings,
God's gift of peace came down on blissful wings,
Filling with happy throngings

The great glad pulse of life,
Till not a thought was left of earth's bequeathing:
The very winds forgot their ancient strife,
And moved with holier breathing,—

A rest so deep and sweet—
No more again for ever to be broken—
For wrong was dead, and sealing its defeat
The Almighty God had spoken.

The prophet's word was truth,
And all the good of holiest books we read in
Had come to pass, and earth's immortal youth
Begun again in Eden.

The promised land at last;
The pledge of a new earth and a new heaven
Stood now fulfilled, and all earth's bitter past
Forgotten and forgiven.

Beneath the smile of God
Earth's strife was dumb, and all its doubt and error
Fled from before His face, a broken cloud
Of guilty things in terror.

And all was His again,
Perfect and pure as in its first creation;
A world baptised anew with holy rain
Of His regeneration.

Old things had passed away;
No creature but possessed some inward token
That made him heaven's for ever from that day,
In words that were not spoken.

One heart in all the world,
One worship without taint of earthly leaven,
Whose one great cloud of altar incense curled
Far up the fragrant heaven.

One voice, and one alone,
Flowing right onward in a mighty river
Of one clear song to Him upon the throne,
For ever and for ever.

And bliss was so complete
I wept for joy, to think the world's weeping
Was done at last, and that the weary feet
Were safe in heaven's keeping.

II.

While heavenly echoes yet
Were in mine ears, sleep changed to bitter waking;
As in upon a trusting heart's blest heat
The world's cold light is breaking.

And all my dreaming ceased,—
I rose and drew aside the window awning;
Far outward in the shivering iron east
A grey cold day was dawning.

The world's dead wall of stone
Beside me yet, with all its old hard features,
The bloodless rock we break our hearts upon,
Earth's miserable creatures.

Down in the hurrying street
I joined the silent faces workward setting.
No time to dream for us, for we must eat
And feed our own begetting.

No time to dream for us,
Life's grim necessities around us gaping,
With tongues that are for ever clamorous,
Whate'er our souls be shaping.

But yet for me and you,
Oh burdened friend unknown, wherever breathing,
Somewhere a world must be whose good and true
Is not of earth's bequeathing,—

Somewhere a life unseen
With nobler strife than but to clothe and feed us;
These hopes that lighten sorrow's dark demesne
Are sent not to mislead us.

And though the world should mock,
Still guard the hope, believing God doth send it,
Let thou no demon doubt of earth's vile stock
Enter thy heart to rend it.

God promises no dreams:
The heavens are true,—it is the earth that's dreaming.
To earth again return her wisest schemes,
To dust her fairest seeming.

And when the end shall come,
When rending heavens from reeling earth shall sever,
That dream shall rise from out the final doom,
To set no more for ever.

LAY NOT THY TREASURE.

Lay not thy treasure at my feet;
I cannot give thee love for love:
My life with all it had of sweet
Belongs to one in heaven above.
The heart that with the strength of youth
Has truly loved in days before,
Can love again on earth in truth
No more, no more,—
On earth again no more.

The flower that's dying at the root,
  Though summer woo it o'er and o'er,
Can never yield its flower or fruit,—
  'Twill bud again on earth no more;
And love whose root is in the grave,
  Though love may seek it as before,
Can give what once on earth it gave
    No more, no more,—
  On earth again no more.

Then take thy treasure unto one
  Who yet can fitly love bestow,
And with it all that I can give
  Of blessing wheresoe'er it go.
But as for me, I wait for him
  Who waits me on life's farther shore;
For once again on earth I love
    No more, no more,—
  On earth again no more.

THE BLACKBIRD.

AT SUNSETTING.

LONELY singer, tell to me,
What is it that aileth thee,
And makes thy song so dreary?
Tell me, am I right or wrong,
Art thou singing sorrow's song?
Is thy heart a-weary?

Dost thou hold within thy breast
Longings of a wild unrest
That never can be spoken?
Has some bird-angel of thy love
Taken wing, the heavens above,
And left thee here, heartbroken?

How comes it that thy lonely lay
Gives but to the dying day
All its sweet sad singing;
And that thy music, gentle bird,
Is silent, or but faintly heard,
When all the woods are ringing?

Say, does thy heart, like mine, but sing
Of others' earthly suffering,
And pity's accents borrow,
That thou, to all the world unknown,
May clothe a suffering of thine own,
And soothe an inward sorrow?

Oh sacred be the soul's regret:
It brings the sweetest singing yet,—
Deeper than love's laughter.
The highest bliss is incomplete
That is not made more heavenly sweet
By tears that follow after:

From secret sources strangely fed,
The singer's heart is comforted
Beyond this world's dreaming:
Behind earth's curtain of seen things
He hears a voice that ever sings,
And sees the flutter of glad wings
Through darkest shadows gleaming.

MATER DOLOROSA.

I HAVE a memory deep in my heart,
Clinging aye close to me, never to part.

Sweetly a little face peers into mine,—
I know that little face every line.

Oh that my day were come, death is so slow,
Keeping me waiting here, ready to go.

I would not wait alone, here in the cold,—
I do not want to live here, and grow old.

If I go back to him now, he will know me,
Now that the world has no more to show me.

All that it has of mine, all that it gave,
Lies with that little face, down in the grave.

There with the chilly grass growing above him,
While I am left without, I, that would love him.

There where I cannot stretch hands out to guide him,
Oh that my heart were there, lying beside him.

Come then and take me, death, me, and no other,—
Who should be nearer him than his own mother?

HEIMWEH.

THERE lies a valley lost to sight,
Yet dearer far than all we see;
Its memory makes earth-darkness light,
And sets the prisoned spirit free;—

A valley with a purer sky
Than earth's serenest air can show,
Where not a sorrow, not a sigh,
Can enter from the world below.

No weary world of strife and sin,
With death's dread shadow at the close;
But once those blessèd fields within
Life leaves behind its earthly woes.

The valley where our loved and lost
Are waiting for us till we come,
When life's dark ocean-path is crossed,
And heavenly voices call us home.

Oh sacred sorrow! sacred love!
Twin guardians of the higher life,
Teach me, and lift my soul above
The world's distracting cares and strife.

Watch thou the gateways of my heart,
Lest evil angels enter in,
And rob me of the better part,
The higher place my soul would win.

Oh save me from the world's desires;
In all its paths that lie in wait,
Oh shame them with thy holy fires,
And purify and consecrate.

And when heaven's higher light is screened,—
When sick at heart I faint and fall,
And life seems but a mocking fiend,
A hollow mask deluding all,—

Oh then let memory enter in
And take possession, heart and head,
To purify from self and sin,
And keep me worthy of the dead.

Until that valley lost to sight
Shall rise unto the perfect day,
And heaven's renewed and conquering light
Shall chase the clouds of death away.

"SHOW ME THY WAY."

A LENTEN HYMN.

Show me Thy way, O Lord!
All else I now resign:
I ask no other word
Or way, O Lord, but Thine.
Of earth's bleak road and rough
My soul has seen enough.

I've proved this poor world's worth
All that its ways afford;
I ask no more of earth—
Show me Thy way, O Lord!
In all the vain world's best
My soul can find no rest.

Show me Thy way, O Lord!
Whate'er the warrant saith,
Send peace, or send a sword,
Send life, Lord, or send death.
If they but show Thy way,
I shall not say them nay.

Earth-guides I leave behind,
With all their ways abhor'd,—
Blind leaders of the blind;
Show me Thy way, O Lord!
I care not what men name it,
Whether they praise or blame it.

Show me Thy way, O Lord!
And from Thy throne above,
Oh bind me with the cord
Of Thy redeeming love,
That I may know at last
Thou hast forgiven the past.

And when, at Death's decree,
I cross the frowning ford,
My prayer still shall be,
Show me Thy way, O Lord!
Till the sweet heavens restore
My loved ones evermore.

A LEAVE-TAKING.

Once more I leave
The land that holds thy dear dead heart;
And though it cannot be but I should grieve,
We do not part.

These tears I shed
Make sorrow's vision strong and clear.
The dead are not far from us: Thou art dead,
And thou art near.

And though I go
Where sunny southern waters wave,
While northern winds shall beat the blinding snow
About thy grave,—

My heart is fed
By faith that tempers every tear.
The living may forsake us: Thou art dead,
And thou art near.

"HE SHALL BE FOR A SANCTUARY."

When I am there! beside my secret Friend,
Of all my earthly friends beyond compare,
A Friend no earthborn soul can comprehend
Till press'd to earth with more than soul can bear:
The burden of its sin and sin's despair;—

When I am there, my burden I unbend;
Oppression cannot follow or offend,
Nor poisoned arrow pierce me unaware,
When I am there.

Behind His shield, the world is fresh and fair,
Though sin contest possession to the end.
I know my safety; Evil may not dare
To cross the inner line that I contend:
The devil himself can only stand and stare,
When I am there!

WHEN APRIL COMES.

When April comes through sun and gloom,
And tempts from winter's willing womb
The life that gladdens flower and tree,
The frisking lambs are on the lee,
And linnets in the budding broom.

All happy living things for whom
Our kindly mother-earth makes room,
Seem happier in their new-born glee
When April comes.

Alas! alas! its fairest bloom
Is poor and powerless to illume
The darkness which it brings to me:
Henceforth, in all my years to be,
I plant fresh flowers about a tomb
When April comes.

A MESSAGE.

I LAY awake the whole night through,
With that old sorrow at my breast,
Which, spite of all that I could do,
Still came between me and my rest.
Thinking of those that are no more,
My soul went back to death's wild wonder,
Sounding the gulf from shore to shore,
That keeps our hearts asunder ;—

Bearing the burden life assigns
To him who spends his dearest breath
Upon the land where no sun shines,
And faints beside the gates of death.
Worn out and weary of the night,
I watched the eastern window awning,
Where first would come the welcome light
To tell me day was dawning.

And as I watched, a little bird
Came twittering to my window-sill,
And sang as if its happy word
Would make me glad against my will.
It gave a voice to what was dumb,
And quenched in tears my burning sorrow:
It seemed some unknown heart had come
To bid my own good-morrow.

And loud and louder as it sang,
I seemed to hear a holier strain
When from the east the dawning sprang,
And smote the glittering window-pane.
I questioned not, I rose from bed,
I felt my life new courage taking:
That bird was sent me from the dead,
To keep my heart from breaking.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS.

What means this wondrous world of ours?
In heaven she wanders night and day,
The circuit of her ceaseless powers,
With suns to light her on her way.

Now all her mighty mountain towers
Roll into darkness, one by one,
And now her bosom decked with flowers
Is heaving upwards to the sun;

Now floating through the azure lake
Of summer; then anon she hears
The brooding tempest rise and wake
The crashing thunder of the spheres.

Can all this grandeur cease to be?
And can this world have only been,
By some inscrutable decree,
The herald of a world unseen?

Can we, earth's creatures of a day,
Who live and die upon her breast,—
Men formed and fashioned of her clay,—
Alone have life beyond the rest?

Strange thought! Oh who can understand
That voice—a whisper at the most—
Which brings, as from a far-off land,
The sense of something we have lost?

Is earth itself not rich with dreams
Of unknown oceans, golden-isled,
For those who hold the holier gleams
And elder instincts of the child?

Turn where we will, 'tis all the same,—
The trackless wind, the heaving sea,
The mighty rivers: all we name
Are emblems of eternity.

Ask of the snow-clad mountain peak
What means the world? no voice replies:
The hoary summit does not speak,
But points thee mutely to the skies.

Nay more; stand there amid the snows,
And strain to listening all thy powers,
And hear the language no man knows,
The murmur of a world not ours.

Until these outer voices find
The inner hearing of the man,
And wake that power within his mind,
That bridges more than reason can.

The thoughts within our hearts all move
To one conclusion: Life must lead
To higher ground than we can prove;
Else wherefore should these voices plead?

For this is truth, all truths above:
He never held the sacred fire
Who knew the limit of his love,
Nor wished it vaster, holier, higher.

And then, when death takes those away
Who stood beside us in the strife,
Ah then! shines out the great new day,
The one reality of life.

At that dread touch the threatening cloud,
Once black with doubt, dissolves in dew,
And all earth's voices sing aloud
The song that maketh all things new.

Roll on with all thy mortal freight!
Roll upward in the heavenly blue,
Oh wondrous world! By day and night
We know the land we travel to.

In every sunset's golden flight,
The purple domes, the shining spires,
The long sweet fields of level light,
We see the home of our desires.

THE TWO SEAS.

"When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee."

EACH night we are launched on a sea of sleep;
No doubts disturb us, no fears annoy.
Though we plough the waves of the darkened deep,
We know we are safe in the Master's keep,
And the morning brings us joy.

What dread, then, should daunt us, what doubt distress,
When on Death's dark sea we are launched alone?
In that deeper sleep, should we trust Him less?
Shall we limit to earth His power to bless?
Will the Father forsake His own?

He made us His children; He bears us to bed;
And whether our sleep be the first or last,
What matters it where our souls are led,
If our trust in the God of the living and dead
Should only hold us fast?

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